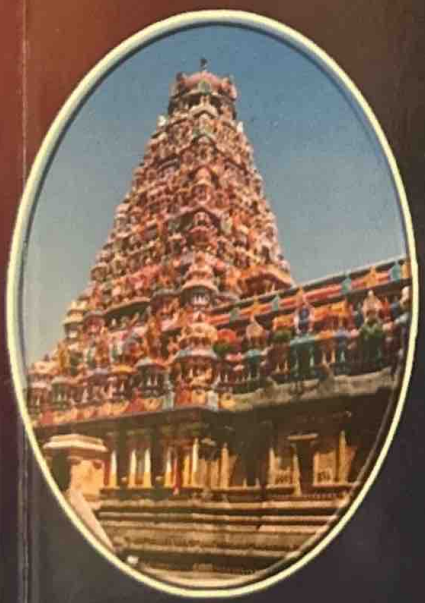
Chola Marvels

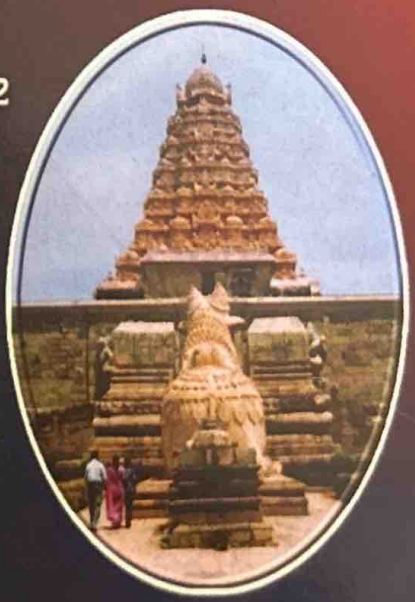
Brihadisvara Temple

Airavatesvara Temple

Pasupathinathar Temple



Kambaharesvarar Temple



Gangaikondacholesvaram Temple

2016

Dr.Vedavalli Kannan & N.Thambiah

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The Great Vimana, Brihdisvara Temple, Thanjavur

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Chola Marvels

The Beginning

Tenth and eleventh Century of Common Era was the period of greatest temple building activity in India. The chola dynasty was responsible for the construction of temples in the Tamil country. It was stated under Vijayalaya Chola in 850 CE in a very small way. After the assumption of the throne by the great Rajaraja, the temple building activity its Zenith.

The Nagesvara Swami temple at Kumbakonam, the Vijayalayacholisvaram at Narttamalai, the Agastyesvara temple at panangudi, the Mahadeva temple at Tiruchendurai, the Koranganatha temple at Srinivasanallur, the Muvarkoil at Kodumbalur, Pasupathikovil at Pullamangai the twin temple at Paluvur, Paluvur temple at Tiruchy are some of the temples represents the early Chola style. They are responsible for the construction of the massive temples by the Later Chola rulers after Rajaraja I.

Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur, Gangaigondacholeswaram at Gangaikondacholapuram, Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram and Kambaharesvara temple at Thirubuvanam are the noteworthy temples. Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram, Darasuram and Thirubuvanam display the Chola architecture and art marvels between 10th and 13th Century CE. The UNESCO has inscribed has

inscribed these three temples (Brihadisvara temple - Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholeswaram - Gangaikonda cholapuram, Airvatesvara temple - Darasuram) as World Heritage Site under the caption "The Great Living Chola Temple" in the year 2004. In this context we felt to focus the beauty of the early Chola temples is also worthy to be presented to the readers of this book on Chola Marvels. Hence, we have included the Pasupathikovil at Pullamangai, which itself speaks its beauty.

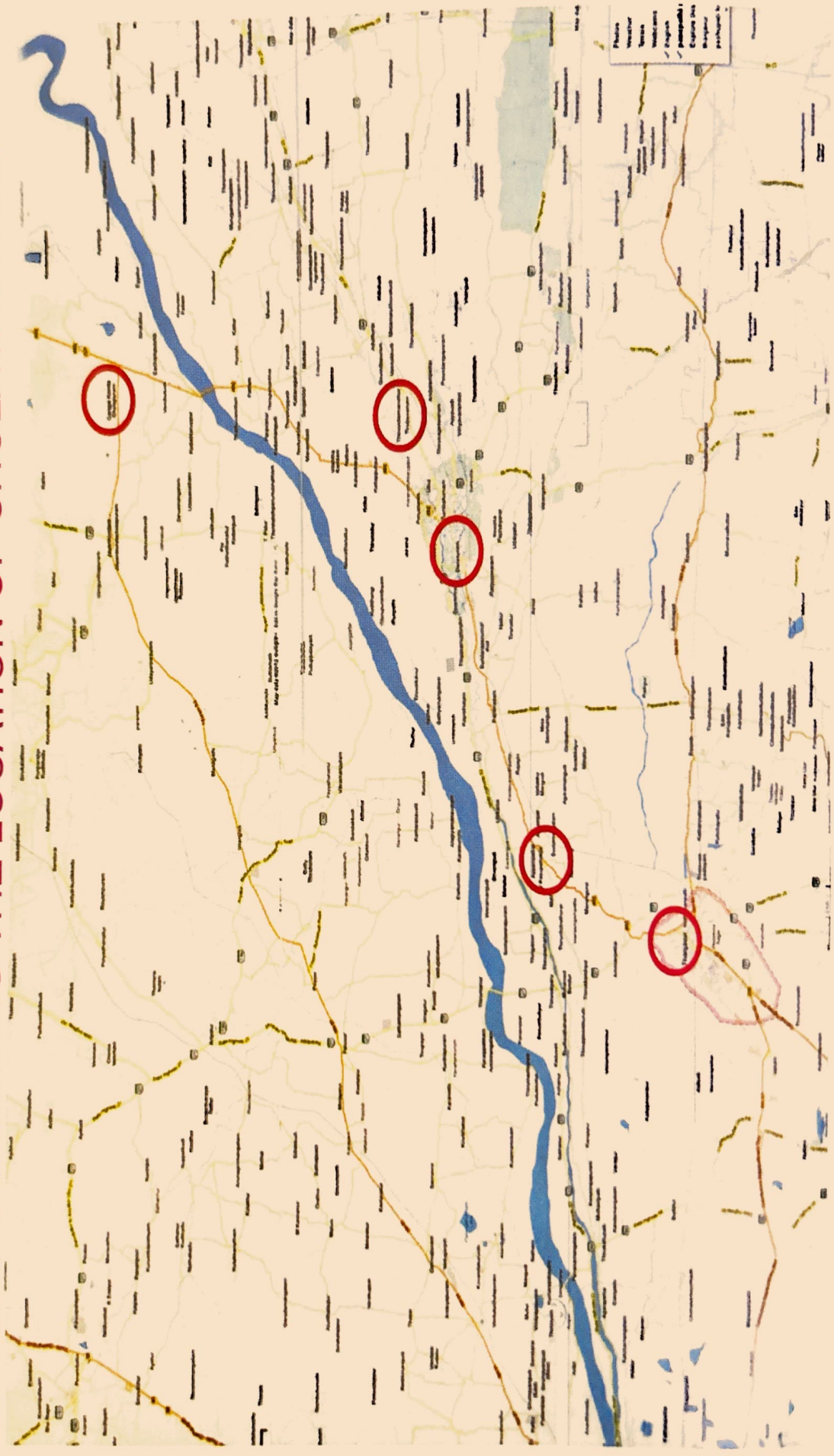
The general features of the Chola temples are the main temple consists of a sanctum tower known as Srivimana or Sri Koil, Garbhagriha, Ardhamandapa and the Maha mandapa. The lowest basement is known as Upapita, next comes in the top is the base or adhistana; above this the wall is seen, after that the following are the other architectural features; roof cornice (prastara) garland or miniature shrines (hara) the storey (tala or bhumi), the neck (griva) the crown (sikhara) and the finial (stupi). The construction of the basements in high platform is the predominant features of this period for the majestic look of the temple. It is adorned with row of leogriffs with lifted pawns, in the niches of the wall portion various deities are housed, above the sanctum a row of miniature towers looks temple like a garland is called as hara. It consists of square pavilion at the corners, rectangular or wagon shaped pavilion in the middle and nest or kudu motifs in between. The sikhara seems to be made up of many pieces of dressed cut stones plastered together.

One has to enjoy the beauty and the elegance of these fine

masterpieces by visiting the Chola period temples at Thanjavur Gangaikondachola puram, Darasuram and Tribhuvanam. The vimana is dominant structure in all the four above said temples. Neither words nor photographs reveal the architectural, sculptural beauty of these temples. It is our sincere attempt to bring these (about 1000 year old) temples near to the readers of the this book. By this we are saluting the master minds and the royal patronage for the construction of these temples.

We are sincerely acknowledging our forefathers who took pains to preserve these architectural marvels and safely handed them to us. We also in this juncture bow our heads to the scholars who have studied the architectural, sculptural style of this temples and revealed their thoughts in their publications.

MAPS SHOWING THE LOCATION OF CHOLA MARVELS



Source : google map

Pullamangai

Pasupathinathar temple

LOCATION

Pullamangai is a small hamlet located near Pasupathi Koil in the Papanasam taluk of Thanjavur district. The Brahmapurisvara temple located in this village is stylistically beautiful, simple and has elegant sculptures. It is one among the best preserved early chola period temple.

THE TEMPLE

The temple was in existence from 7th century AD which was indicated by the Devaram hymns of Sambandar. The name of the God is Brahmapurisvarar/ Pasupathinathar and the Goddess Soundaravalli. In the Devaram Hymns of Panniruthirumurai (1. 16.1.1-11) (Twelve holy scriptures of Saivism) the God is mentioned as Thiru Alandurai Mahadevar. Builder of the temple is PARANTHAKA CHOLA (907 - 953 AD) From inscription of this temple, it is revealed that the village was known as Pullamangalam and was situated in KIZHAR KOTTAM of CHOLA MANDALAM.

The early Chola period sculptures are found in the basement of the sanctum and ardha mandapa. They are carved with minute details, expressive faces, and in fantastic poses. The Vimana is a tritala (three tired) structure of the early chola style, facing east. The entire temple was constructed out of stone, but the griva, sikara and stupi are later addition. The ardhamandapa is also the part of the original stone structure of this period.

GANAPATHI

Ganapathi is in seated position with all the usual attributes and the umbrella is present over his head. The Ganas are present on either side of Ganapathi represent the fact that he was the Lord of the Ganas ie. Ganapathi.

SAMHARAMURTHI

Shiva is represented in sculptures as a terrific, destructive deity. He is known by several names each one being indicative of the destruction of trouble making asuras or demons.

THIRUPURANTAKA MURTI

Lord is shown in movement. Standing with right leg slightly raised; left planted firmly on a part of the Chariot. With eight arms, right hands holding Chakara (wheel), Bana (Arrow). Sword, and the left lower hand shows the

posture of Suchi hastham (finger shown in pointing position), right five arms shown with Conch (Shanka), Bow (Dhanus), Shield (Khetaka), and in Viswamaya posture (to depict the surprise or wonder of the lords act).

Goddess is shown seated on the left. Devas are depicted on either side of Shiva. Concept of Thripuranthaka was very famous and mostly depicted in most of the Chola period Shiva temples.

The earliest sculpture of this representation is found at Kailasanathar temple at Kanchipuram belongs to 7th century AD.

A temple exclusive for this aspect of Shiva is worshipped in the village called KUVAM, near Chennai Metro. The God is worshipped as Thiruvirkolanathar (The God with bow).

KANKALAMURTI

Standing posture with left leg planted firmly on the ground; right leg slightly bent; kept a bit forward suggests that the figure is in the act of walking. Head ornamented with Jatamakuta (hair headgear). in the left side adorned with a few flowers locally called as Umatham flower (dhatura); right side crescent moon and snake. Ears adorned with kundalas.

Four arms right upper arm holds Drum (Dhamaru), lower arm shown stretched out and its hand held in the Kataka (figures in holding something) pose near the mouth of the deer. The back left lower hand holds the Kankala danda (the staff on which the body of the dead person is tied up) placed on the left shoulder

horizontally. Holding something may be a skull in the left upper arm. Surrounded by a number of women and the Bhutaganas. One Ganga shown with a vessel for storing the food in the left side. The image of Kankalamurthi is almost found in all Shiva temples in South India.

GAJASURA SAMHARAMURTI

The left leg shown planted firmly on the head of the elephant while the right one is bent and lifted up above the thigh of the other leg.

The tail of the elephant is visible over the jatabahara (hair dress) of Shiva.

On either side the legs of the elephant are depicted like the Prabhamandala (halo shown behind the head)

Eight arms: Three out of the four in the right side arms carry trisula, damaru, pasa and the fourth one holding the skin of the elephant; one of the left arms shown in vimaya pose, another one catch hold of the skin of the elephant and the remaining two arms carrying a kapala (skull) and the tusk of the elephant.

On the left side the goddess is

depicted standing with Skanda in her hand trembling with fear at the ferocity of her Lord.

ALINGANACHANDRA SEKARA MURTI

Chandrasekharamurti implies an image which has Chandra (moon) as his head ornament.

Lord Shiva seated on Bull (Nandi), the vehicle of the God.

Embracing the Devi with one of his upper left arms. Upper right arm lies on seated Bull while the lower arm shown in the posture of pacifying the Goddess, the position of the lower right is not visible.

Goddess is seated holding a flower in her right arm while the left and rest near the god.

Bhudhaganas are also seen in the bottom and behind the god.

Both Shiva and Uma appear young, the style and beauty of the figures catch the eyes and soul of the viewers.

NRITTAMURTI

Shiva is a great master in the art of dancing.

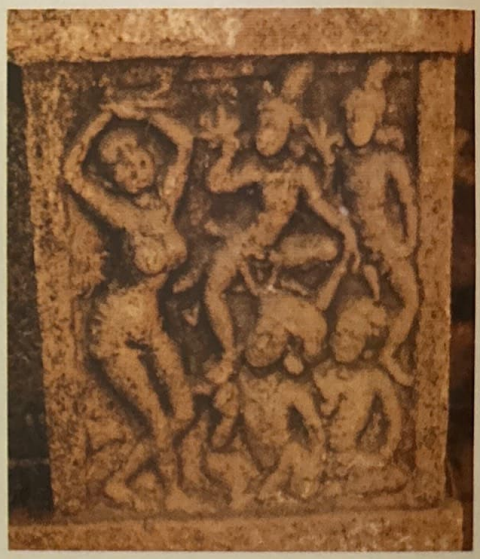
Right leg of shiva is lifted up to the knee of the left one and is in the act of stamping the ground; left is little bent and is resting upon the ground.

Eight arms of Shiva the right arms hold drum (damaru), axe (parasu). skull and giving protection (abhaya) pose respectively; left arms from the top hold fire (agni), snake, trident (trisula) & the upper arm shown in paptaka pose (a kind of expression of the arm by the dancer).

Goddess Uma is Seated in the left side. In the Right side a gana is standing with holding something.

SHIVA IN SEATED POSITION

Elegantly depicted miniature sculpture. Seated Shiva shown with bull in the left side, Uma standing by the right side. Bhudaganas are shown in various postures.



DANCING GLAD

Damsel (Apsara) dancing, two figures are shown watching. Two male dancers are also shown.

TWO WARRIORS FIGHTING WITH DEMON

Two warriors holding the hands of the demon, in the pose of fighting. A lady is seen near the demon holding a flower. Warriors might be krishna and Balarama fighting with a demon or Rama and

Lakshmana fighting with a demon.

KIRATARJUNAMURTI

God Shiva showing his benevolence to the devotees is known as Anugrahamurti.

Representation of this sculpture is shown in a movement of fight holding bow and arrow.

Arjuna is seen fighting furiously holding sword.

A boar is shown below the legs of Shiva.

A figure is noticed in the upper portion might be the sculptural representation of Vishnu.

LINGODBAVAMURTI

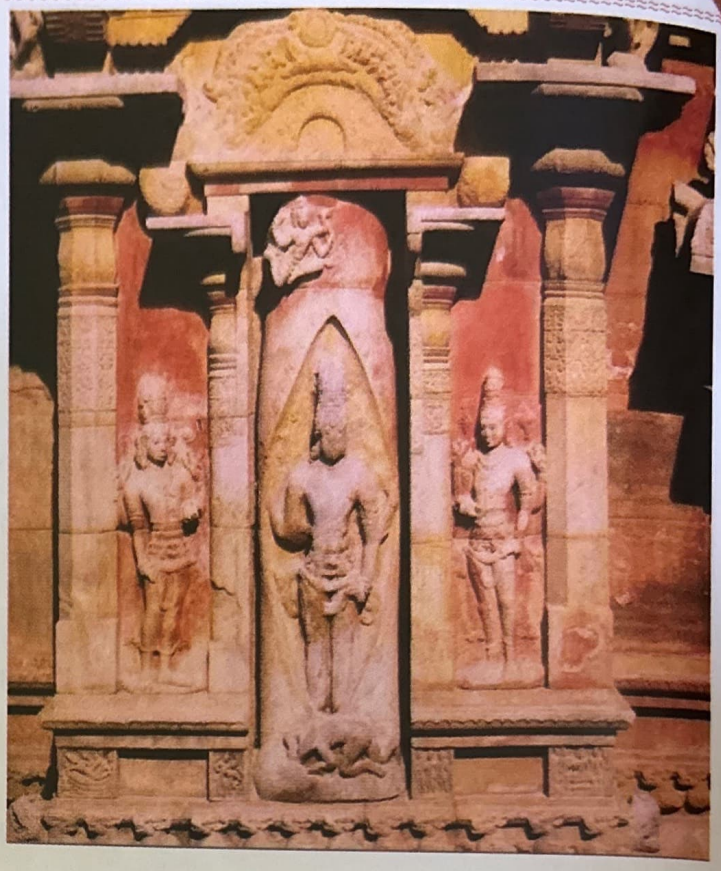
This is a common icon found in South India. According to the Agamas it should be placed in the niche in the western wall of the Garbhagriha or the central shrine. Shiva is said to have appeared in the form of blazing pillar of immeasurable size to quell the pride of Brahma and Vishnu.

Shiva is depicted appearing from the linga.

Brahma is shown in an anthropomorphic form of a swan above the Linga. Vishnu is also depicted in the anthropomorphic form of a boar digging the earth below.

On either side of the devakoshta, Brahma and Vishnu are also depicted in full human form.

BRAHMA



Out of the four, three peaceful faces are visible. the central face shown slightly turning towards the Lingodhbhava murti.

Head dress jata makuta adorned with all ornaments Gold or ruby earrings.

(Kundalas) are seen in the ears.

Under garments reach upto the knee. standing with right leg slightly bent; while the left leg rests firmly on the ground.

With four arms Rossary garland (Akshamala) in the right upper arm; Left upper arm holds an auspicious pot (kamandalu)

Lower left hand holds a kurcha (a handful of kusa grass) and the sacred tread (yajnopavita) passing through his chest; Lower right hand is shown resting upon the thigh (katyavalambita hasta)

VISHNU

Vishnu is in standing position with four arms. Standing with left leg slightly bend; while the right leg rests firmly on the ground.

Head dress kirta makuta adorned with all ornaments. Gold ear rings (kundalas) are seen in the ears. under garments reach upto the knee.

Standing with right leg slightly bent; While the left leg rest firmly on the ground. With four arms; the right upper arm holds chakra in the aiming

(prayoka) position.

Left upper arm holds the conch (sankha). Lower right hand holds the sacred tread (yajnopavita) passing through his chest; Lower left hand is shown resting upon the thigh (Katyavalambita hasta).

CHANDESANUGRAHAMURTI

Act of benevolence shown by shiva to Chandesvara depicted in this sculpture.

Seated Shiva and garland in the head of Chandesvara with his lower right hand; left upper hand holding the end of a flower garland tying it round the head of Chandesvara; upper right hand holds axe (Parasu), while the lower left hand not visible might be holding deer (antelope).

Chandesvara is seated in worshiping (anjali) posture with folded hands. Bhudhaganas seen behind the God.

Nandi is seen below the right side leg of Shiva.

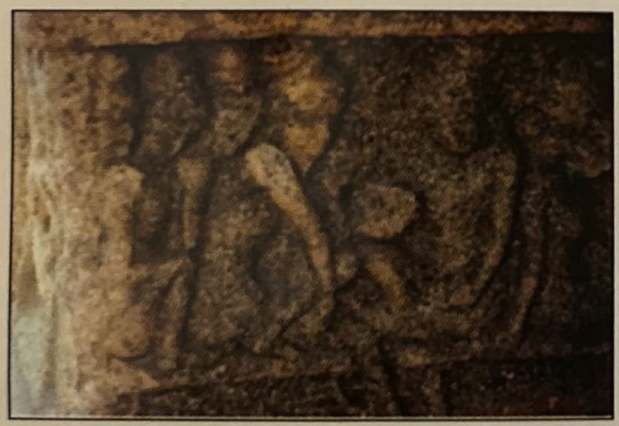
Yall freeze in a row

The narration of Ramayana story from the sculptural panel at Pullamangai

The stories of two epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha penetrated in to the heart and soul of Indian people even in ancient period. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari the stories not only enacted in the form of dance, drama and in other oral ballads and folk art, also seen in the form of sculptures. The Ramayana and Mahabharatha stories might have enacted in the temples which inspired the kings to engrave small miniature sculptures in the temples that they have constructed.

The Ramayana story miniature panel sculptures of early Chola period are found at Nagesvara temple at Kumbakonam, the Brahmapurisvara temple Pullamangai, the Sadaimudinathar temple at Tiruchennampundi all in Thanjavur district and Samavedisvara temple at Tirumangalam, Tiruchirapalḷi district.

The Ramayana panel from Pullamangai is found in the vimana and ardhamandapa pada portion of the temple. Apart from this the stories from Mahabharata, Bhagavata puran, Siva purana and other puranaic episodes are also carved in the galapada portion. Following are the panel sculptures found in the pada and galapada portion of the temple.



The sacrifice of Dasaratha birth of Rama,

Rama's encounters with Tataka and her raksasa sons,

reliving Ahalya's curse, breaking Siva's bow and getting married to Sita ,

Royal couple entry into Ayodhya and the aftermath. The last four scenes represent events leading to coronation attempt and Kaikeyi's subsequent challenge to king Dasaratha.

The scene depicts Rama leaving the city in a chariot and the people of Ayodhya expressing their extreme sorrow and grief in a verity of ways and means.

Another scene Rama crossing the river Ganges in Guha's boat , events at the forest encounter with Surpanakha and the abduction of Sita by Ravana .

Surpanakha appealing to Khara

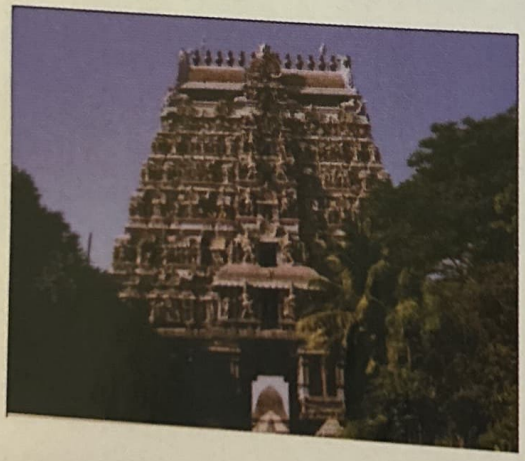
After this the portrayal includes Jatayu's fight with Rama, and his death in the hands of Rama.

The narration of Ramayana story is very interesting to be seen at Pullamangai temple. It is the centre of attraction for the tourist and other visitors of this temple.

CHIDAMBARAM NATARAJA TEMPLE

Familiar & Unfamiliar data

Chidambaram is a municipal town and one of the taluk headquarters in Cuddalore district. It is situated in the Kollidam River valley about 11 km from the coast, 20 kms from the towns kollidam and Sirkazhi, 60 kms from Karikal and 240 kms from Chennai. It is

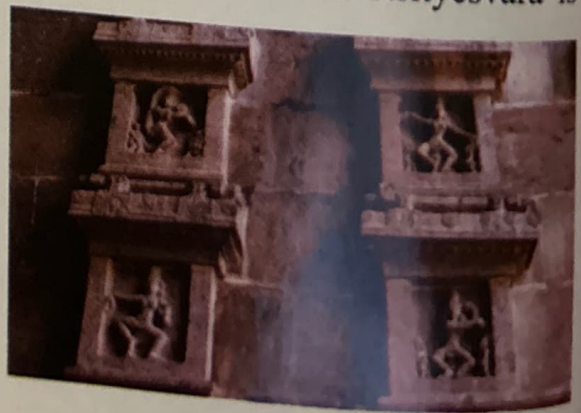


a famous pilgrimage centre for Saivites as well as Vaishnavites.

To the followers of Saivism or the saivaite, the very word ***koil*** refers to Chidambaram. In the same way, to the followers of Vaishnavism it refers to Srirangam or ***Thiruvarangam.***

Nataraja Siva

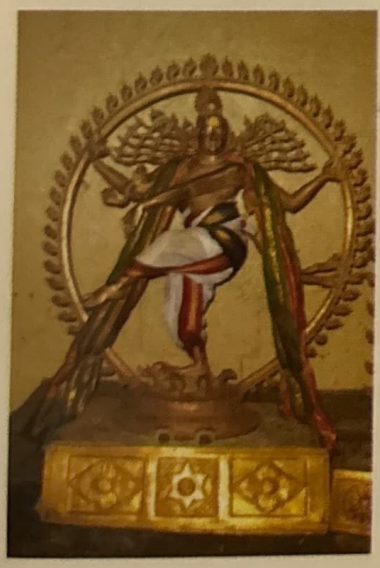
The from of Siva as Nataraja also known as Natesa or Nrityesvara is worshipped in many parts of India. This form of Siva is venerated by the devotees, religious philosophic thinkers, writers, poets, artists, painters, and experts of Indian art history. The images of Nataraja is the favourite theme for any artist



even today, in stone, metal, wood, painting and paper. In south India, particularly in Tamil Nadu Nataraja is venerated and worshipped each and every temple. He is portrayed on the front potion of the main temple (*prasada*). placed on the south. The metal images of the Nataraja installed in sub - shrines inside the temple which also face the south. The great temple of Chidambaram also faces the south.

The Nataraja as a concept and worship goes back to pre-Gupta times (4th century CE) in India. this form of Siva is very popular. The name Nataraja, means the Lord Shiva as master of dance. ie., raja (master)nata (nrittya or dance). In the ancient society, this kind of form was not worshipped and adorned all over the world. According to S.P. Tewari, the authority on Hindu Iconography says that "the dancing Lord is not dancing for amusement. The dance of Nataraja is as universal dance which trembles the whole cosmos on one side and makes it stable again on the other. It combines the rhythm of life, shelter and *abhaya* on one hand and destruction of all the evils on the other."He also stated that in this form Siva Nataraja all his auspicious (*saumya*) and inauspicious (*ugra or asiva*). It stands as a never surpassed model of eternity.

Gangaikonda Cholapuram



According to Dr. Nagasamy , the eminent scholar in the field of art history particularly the plastic art, in his book on Masterpieces of Early South Indian Brones, mentions that according to the Saiva

नृत्तावसाने नटराजराजो
ननाद ढक्कां नवपञ्चवारम् ।
उद्धर्तुकामः सनकादिसिद्धान्
एतद्विमर्शे शिवसूत्रजालम् ॥

Initial vibration caused by the sound of the *damaru* (drum) held in his right hand

Siddhanta, "Lord Siva is the creator, sustainer, dispellor of ignorance, grantor of solace and destroyer of the five essential acts called pancakriyas. The lord creates and destroys. Destruction is being recognized as not only the end but also the beginning (antam adi ie., anta is adi) and Siva's dance is the cosmic dance *ulikkuttu*. His dance destroys all samasta sambhara tandava. his is the dance of knowledge jnana kuttu and above all his is the dance of bliss the paramanda tandava.

Nagasamy also states that upper sphere the space above the linga in the sanctum should be worshipped as a akasa, the supreme and tranquil space where the blissful dance takes place.

Sivaramamurthi famous scholar in the field of art history in India quoted a famous inscription of Chandrehe from the time of Prabodhasiva. In this epigraph the dance of the Nataraja and its after effects are very cautiously descibed. It states that 'May the Tandava dance of Siva (the Lord of Chandi) give you pleasure which caused the hood of Sesa (the king of snakes) to bend down owing to the vortex created by the earth revolving in accordance with the movements of the feet of Siva who is skilled in practicing the *Chari step* (in dancing) whose dance put to flight the elephants of the cardinal points because of the revolutions of his rod like arms, and whose dance suddenly caused commotion in parts of the universe (and) which (was accompanied by the) deep sound of the *damaru* gives you pleasure'. The Siva *Tandava stotram* also expresses the deep sounds of the damaru of Siva with exact the same onomatopoeic tune as that the inscription refers

Iconography of Nataraja:

Lord Siva's dance is a symbolic of the five acts, creation is set off by the initial vibration caused by the sound from the damaru (drum) held in his right hand, protection by abhaya mudra of the

front right arm, the ignorance dispelled by the dwarfish figure trampled below right leg the lifted arm which points to the lifted leg is the solace of the world, while the fire in the left arm dissolves universe. The circular aureole represents the cosmos, the glowing Sun, the moon, the stars and all of nature revolving in perpetual motion. Parvati as Sivakumai is the witness to this cosmic activity, rather the inspirer of the divine sport of the Lord. Thus it is necessary every Nataraja image to be invariably accompanied by Sivakamasundari.

In the stone images of Nataraja at Gangaikonda Cholapuram Karaikalammayar is seen with *talas* in her hand.

The reign of Rajaraja Chola witnessed the production in large number of Nataraja images, several of great sizes. As many as four Nataraja images were said to be donated to the Thanjavur big temple by him of which two of them are kept in the temple even today, the larger one now worshipped in the temple being the finest representation in metal. Rajaraja who was the ardent devotee of Nataraja mentioned this form in his epigraphs as Adavallan i.e. the master dancer. Even the standard weights and measures of the temple were called as Adavallan. His passion for sculpturing the 108 tandava forms around the upper tier of the main sanctum of Rajarajeswaram, the big temple at Thanjavur.

There is a painting present above this tire showing his great affection on Nataraja at Chidambaram temple.

Literary references:

Saint Sundarar his *Thiruthondar thogai* (the sacred poem listing of Lord Siva's 63 devotees) paying his respects to the priests of the Thillai temple by saying that *'To the devotees of the priests at Thillai, I am a devotee.'*

The Saiva nayanmars such asThirugnana Sambanthar, Appar, Manikkavachakar were also associated with this temple. Thirugnana Sambanthar has composed 2 songs in praise of the Lord at Chidambaram, Appar 8 Tevarams in praise of Nataraja, and Sundarar one song in praise of Lord Nataraja. Manikkavasagar has written two works, the first called Tiruvasakam (The sacred utterances) which largely has been sung in Chidambaram and the *Thiruchitrambalakkovaiyar* (aka Thirukovaiyar), which has been sung entirely in Chidambaram. Manikkavasagar is said to have attained spiritual bliss at Chidambaram.

The works of the first three saints were stored in palm leaf manuscripts in the temple and were recovered by the Chola King *Arunmozhivarman*, more famously called Rajaraja Chola under the guidance of Nambiandarnambi.

Chidambaram has been centre of educational activities. Great poets composed their poems in this temple. Many Saiva Siddhanta works were written in this temple.

The Sthalapurana's are also important source material to known the significance of the place and the temples that exist there.

The Sanskrit sthalapuranam's are Chidambara rakasayam, Tillaivana manmiyum, Vyagrapathar manmiyum, Puliyur manmiyum, Pundarkapura manmiyum, Chidambara manmiyurm, Emasapanatha manmiyurm and Citsabha prthita manmiyurm,

sundarar with paravai and sankili

There are four Sthalapura' mentions about the puranic and historical significance of this temple they are namely Koil puranam, Chidambara puranam, Puliyurppuranam, and Chidambara sambanatha puranam.

1.Koil Puranam written by Umapathi Sivachariyar hailed from Kotrankudi contains 5 charukam *(Vyagrapathar charukkam, Patanjali charukkam, Natapasa charukkam, Iraniya vanmach charukkam and Tiruvizha charukkam)* and 415 *pairayam*

பிறந்திலம் ஆரூர் தன்னிற் பேசிய காசி மேசி
இறந்திலம் இரண்டு முத்தி இன்பமும் பின்ப தாநாம்
உறைந்திடுந் தில்லை ஞான யோகமார் தான மாமால்
செறிந்தடி காணச் சீவன் முத்தராய்த் திரியலாமே
-இரண்யவன்மச் சருக்கம் 68

The poem mentions that it is not necessary to born at Tiruvarur , or to die at Kasi, but if you see and worship the Lord at Tillayampathi our soul will attain its goal.

2. Chidambara puranam

Contains 10 charukams and 813 poems written by Tirumalai nathar

3. Puliyru Puranam

Written By Yazhpanathu Thillippzhai Sivananthaiyar, has 17 padalams consists and 1205 poems. It is the Tamil translation of Puliyur mahamathiyam.

Shivalinga shapped Thiruvasagam in palf leaves and rudraksha on the top

4. Chidambara Sabhanatha puranam

It is by Tiruvaduthurai Athenathu Vithuvasikamani Sabahapathi Navalar. It has 898 poems and 14 padalams.

Temple inscriptions:

Inscriptions are found in Temple walls, boulders, separate stones and pillars in each and every village of Tamil Nadu. These epigraphs throw valuable light on history of Tamil nadu including each and every village. The summary of these records were brought out in English by Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India under the title Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARE)from the year 1887 to 2000.

The following Chidambaram inscriptions are copied and published in the ARE

SI No	Year	No	Total
1	1888	115 - 124	10
2	1892	170 - 184	15
3	1902	455 - 468	14
4	1903	390 - 401	12
5	1913	260 - 376	117
6	1915	1	1
7	1918	545 - 551	7
8	1930	610 - 616	7
9	1934 - 35	103 - 109	7
10	1935 - 36	1 - 48	48
11	1944 - 45	28 - 29	2
12	1958 - 59	303 - 340	38
13	1962 - 63	547 - 572	26

Some of the full texts of the inscriptions have been published in another series of publications called as South Indian Inscriptions Volumes (SII Vols.) and an inscription published in the Avanam.(Publication by the Tamilaga Tholliyal Kazhagam).

SI No	SII Volume No	Text No
1.	Chidambaram, S/ARE	86, 87 / III
2.	Chidambaram, S/ARE	220 to 229, 618 to 632 / IV
3.	Chidambaram, S/ARE	43 - 56, 706 - 717 / VIII
4.	Chidambaram, S/ARE	149, 551, 52, 54, 157, 159 160, 171 - 175, 201, 209, 215, 216, 245, 249, 250, 251 / XII
5.	Aavanam 11, SI. No. 26	

There are 304 total number of inscriptions found in this temple. From the available evidences that the original shrine was the Sri Mulasthanm in the Tillai forest and the Nataraja shrine is a later addition. But the time of Vijalaya Chola both shrines were in existence , but there is no original inscription of Vijayalay chola found in the temple.

Lord Nataraja was the family deity of Vikrama Chola(1128 AD) and his successors. He spent the bulk of his revenue for construction of the walls and addition of the structure of the temple. Chidambaram rose in popularity due to its proximity to Gangaikonda cholarapuram built and made as the capital of the imperial Cholas by Rajendra Chola.

There is a number of inscriptional reference about the location of the Chidambaram and its administrative sub divisions. From the epigraphs Peruparrappuliyur alias Chidambaram as a *taniyur* (separate *ur* or town). In this *taniyur* there were twenty three *pidagai* or hamlets. Which were in turn situated in *Rajadhiraja valanadu.*

A few interesting inscriptions are dealt for public interest:

Parantaka I (907-955 AD) the second of the Imperial Chola's is said to have been covered the Sri vimana of the Chidambaram temple with gold. His this sacred act had been praised in the copper plates issued by the later chola kings. Particularly the Laiden plates and Karanthai plates gives more information about Parantaka's deed.

Chidambaram temple Gopurams and hall constructed by the Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara rulers namely;

The thousand pillar mandapam thought by many as the construction of 17th century was in existence from 12th century AD during the regime of Kulottuga II as per the literary evidences. The poet Sekkizhar who was a contemporary of Kulottunga II is said to have first recited Tirunalaippovar Puranam (the story of a devotee of Lord Shiva) in the mandapam which is popularly known as Raja Sabha or the hall of State. The poet sekkihar came to Chidambaram and took one year to compose the work. After its completion it was covered with silk cloth, and carried round on an elephant and dedicated to the Lord.

The eastern gopuram and Nritta sabha in front of the Nataraja shrine were built by Kulottunga II during 1133-1143 A.D; The Southern gopuram was built by Chokksiyan who was identified with Kopperunjinga of the Pallava Chieftain in the 13th century AD; The western gopuram by the Pandya king Jatavarma Sundarapandya during 1251-1268 AD; The northern gopuram was constructed by Vijayanagara king Krishnadeva raya in 1516 AD in commemoration of his victory over the king of Orissa; the thousand pillar hall is constructed in the period 1595-1696 AD;

some parts of temple were renovated during the later part of the 19th century by a devotee Pachiappa Mudaliar of Kanchipuram, Raja Annamalai chettiyar and the Nagarthar community.

Bharathanatya panels:

There are bas reliefs sculptures represent the dance themes. Bharathamuni's 'Natya Sastra', the classical treaties on the dance art of Bharathanatyma is illustrated in granite carvings on the gopuram as well as within the temple precincts. According to this treatise there are 108 dance postures, fifty four of them are sculptured on inner side of the doorways of the gopurams.

The present structure and architecture are dated to 12th to 13th century CE. It was during the reign of Kulothunga I (1070-1125 AD). The first enclosure of the temple was refereed in the inscriptions as *Kulottnga solan Tirumaligai.* The second wall of enclosure was known as V*ikrama solan Tirumaligai.*

The general Naralokavira who was a native of Arumbakkam and the chieftain of Manavil, south of the Palar was known for benefactions to temples chiefly at Chidambaram and Tiruvadigai.

According to S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, in his later Chola Temples book gives detailed account of the activities by Naralokavira he narrates that "He had provided services to the temple namely, the gilding of the temple, the provision of streetlights and the watering of the main streets on festivals days; the raising of flower gardens and areca-palm groves; the construction of a road to the sea to take the Deity in procession to the bathing ghat at Killai, a mandapa to house the deity. The enclosure wall was named after him as Naralokaviran Tirumaligai, with two tall towers the hall resting on a hundred pillars for Pasupati and His consort'; the shrine of the Goddess with towers and walls of enclosure; the building of a flight of stone steps for the Sivaganga (the sacred tank) the installation of an image of Sambandar in a shrine, and the

Konerirajapram Nataraja

construction of a hall for the recitation of his Devaram hymns, the engraving of the songs of the three Devaram hymnists on copper plates and the construction of a sluice to a large irrigation tank in the neighbourhood of Chidambaram. Very probably this is a reference to the Viranam tank (Viranaryanan eri) which was considered as then as almost of the northern boundary of the *taniyur* of Perumparrappuliyur (Chidambaam)

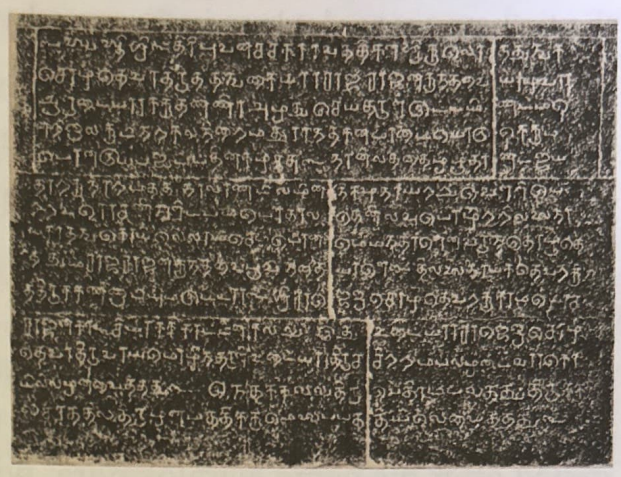
The huge amman shrine was built during this time with walls of enclosure and adorned with a gopuram at the gate way.

குனித்தபுருமுங் கொவ்வைச் செவ்வாயிற் குமிண்சிரிப்பும்
பனித்தசடையும் பவளம்போன் மேனியிற் பால்வெண்ணீறும்
இனித்தமுடைய வெடுத்தபொற் பாதமுங் காணப்பெற்றால்
மனித்தப்பிறவியும் வேண்டுவதே யிந்த மாழலத்தே.

- கோயில் - அப்பர்

Narolokavira's Chidambaram Inscription Listing his Contributions to the Nataraja Temple

The several benefactions of the Chola General Naralokaviran are listen in a long inscription found on the third prakara wall in the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram; it is in verse form and contains thirty-one verses in Sanskrit and thirty -six venbas in Tamil (SII, Texts, Vol.IV). The Tamil portions at many places, repeat and confirm the statements contained in the Sanskrit portion.



1. The first verse forms a preamble and states that, to describe the benefactions of Manavatara (another name of Naralokavira), to Sabhapati (Nataraja) performing the Cosmic Dance for the welfare of the three worlds and Whose form encompasses both heaven and earth, even a hundred mouths would be inadequate, and beseeches the reader to 'hear' then t leisure.

2. The second verse states that he set up innumerable street lights(vithi-dipa) to dispel darkness and make the place resplendent as it with eternal sunshine.

3. The third verse says that he provided for watering the streets at the city on festival days (with waters of the holy *tirthas*), when Siva the destroyer of Manmatha, the Lord of Love, was taken out in procession.

4. According to the fourth verse, he, in his infinite devotion to the Lord, planted fifty thousand areca palms, and watered them as it were with the waters of the Ganga flowing from the matted locks of Siva, as they tossed about when he danced. The Tamil portion gives their number and hundred thousand.

5. The next verse which is a continuation of the previous one mentions that he raised a sacred flower garden (*nandavana*), extending upto the limits of the sea, with trees tall as the sky and full of fragrant flowers; it was filled with the bustle of the gods who came to witness the dance of Siva.

6. The sixth verse says that he erected a *mandapa* near the sea whose massive waves rolling towards the shore seemed to invite the the devotees as it were with its hands; further he opened a broad road from the city to the sea coast for the *tirthayatra* of Nataraja. From the Tamil portion we see that the tirthayatra took place in the month of *Masi.*

7. The seventh verse mentions that near that mandapa, he excavated a big tank of sweet water, which appeared like the heart of the sea, with a large banyan tree that stood near it like a mandapa, spreading branches on the bank to provide shade and shelter to the pilgrims flocking thither for the *tirthayatra.*

8. The eight verse mentions that he constructed, round the temple Sabhapati Who took a vow to burn the three cities of the Asuras, a great wall called after his name Naralokavira, with tall towers, on which resplendent flags were flying; the flew so high that, when they became hot with the scorching sun so close, they cooled themselves lapping up the waters of the clouds.

9. The ninth verse refers to the same theme as the previous one; and adds that he also built two tall towers reaching on to the sky from which the flags few majestically as if inviting people from different parts to take shelter under their shade from the scorching heat of the sun.

10. The tenth verse says that Naralokavira, whom the poets call Arulakara (the embodiment of piety and grace), justified the name by constructing a hall with a hundred pillars, dabrasabha, i.e., the little hall' or Chitrambalam, where Pasupati (Nataraja), seeing that it was a place meant for His dance, disported Himself with His beloved.

11. The eleventh verse refers to the sacred tank in the temple and the flight of stone steps that he built round it which looked like the path by which his fame was to descend to the nether world. On either side of the golden gateway on the southern side (of the temple), he set up auspicious lamps (*mangala dipas*) which dispelled from the subjects the darkness earthy life.

12. In the twelfth verse, it is said that the priests of the temple who performed the worship of the Lord having the Nandi banner were the recipients of rich endowments from him; Further he erected a fine hall gold for the constant recitation of Kumara *stotra*, a reference to *Devaram* hymns

of Jnanasambandhar, known also as Aludaiya Pillaiyar. From the Tamil verse, it is learnt that he the lands in the village of Tyagavalli and others tax - free, and constructed an *agrahara* for the *brahmanas* to live in.

13. The next verse states that he constructed a sluice for the big tank for irrigating the lands of the *brahmanas* known as the 'Three thousand *Tillai*' (*Tillaimuvayiravar*).

14. From the next verse, it is understood that he covered " The Hall" (*mahatim sabham*, which refers to the *Perambalam*) with copper.

15. The next verse says that he constructed a golden vehicle with Nandi mounted on it, and on this vehicle the deity was take in procession during the *bhikshatana yatra* (the journey of Siva mendicant).

16. The sixteenth verse says that a bugle inlaid with gold intended to announce the arrival of Devadeva (the Lord of Lords, Siva) was presented by him to the temple. The verse adds that, on hearing the bugle note announcing the arrival of Siva, even the hands of Indra automatically folded in adoration over his head, touching his crown.

17. The seventeenth verse says that, for the worship of the 'Dancer in the Hall', he made arrangements for the supply of fresh flowers which bestowed grace both on humanity and on the celestial beings; he also offered gold vessels to keep offerings vying with nectar in quality.

18. The eighteenth verse says that Naralokavira, who knew the essence of Siva worship, gave precious jewels, which were pure and blemishes like the heart of sages, to adorn the sacred body of the Lord of Dancers of the Hall.

19. The nineteenth verse states that he made provisions for the offerings of the nectar of milk with sugar-candy to the Lord of Gauri to Whom the celestial beings had given poison to drink. In the Tamil part, Naralokavira is I sreferred to as Tondaiyar-kon, the Lord of the people of Tondai.

20. The next verse mentions that he endowed the temple of Dhurjati (Siva) with ten perpetual lamps (nirya dipa), lit with camphor, whose fragrance pervaded the whole earth.

21. The next verse says that Naralokavira presented to the Lord a ----

(kalasa) and many other vessels made of gold, the brilliance of proclaimed to the world that unfailing service and devotion to the feet Hara brought merit.

22. The next verse states that he presented one thousand milk cow to the God in the temple for conducting His *abhisheka* with milk that resembled nectar.

23. The next verse states that he set up an image of Nandi (the the sacred bull) who by his constant and unceasing devotion to Sambhu obtained his grace (*priti*) and from whom permission to enter the presence of Nataraja is sought by the Lord of *Vaikuntha* (Vishnu) the other goods coming there for worship every morning; he also presented to the temple an image of the Goddess.

24. The next verse says that Naralokavira presented to the temple many beautiful jewels set with precious stones and also gave. away a village, after making it tax -free, to meet the expenses of (worship).

25. The next verse says that he made provision of one thousands measures of ghee for performing *abhisheka* every year to the god enshrined in the *sanctum sanctorum* (mulasthana) Tiru-mulan) from the Tamil part it is learnt that the *abhisheka* was to be performed with one thousand *nalis of ghee*.

26. The next verse states that he set up a golden image of Tiru Jnanasambandhar who drink milk from the sacred breast Girija (Parvati) and obtained the grace of Sarasvati and danced and sang the praise of Srikantha (Siva), and that he also made provision for the offering of payasam (sweetened milk-drink) to the deity.

27. The twentyseventh verse states that he set up an image of Bhattacharya who was the chief among the Brahmanakula and who had defeated in debate the adherents of religions outside the verdic lore and established the Siva religion on the earth.

28. In the next verse, it is said that he erected a prakara and a mandapa to the shrine (Tirukkamakkottam) of the goddess Parvathi Whose image was adorned from head to foot with fine jewels befitting the dancing hall of Her Lord (svapati natanasthana yogyam).

29. The next verse says: he presented to the goddess enshrined in the Kamakoshta (*or Tirukkamkkottam*, i.e., to Sivakami Amman) of the temple, a pitambara (yellow robe) made of gold, the brilliance of which pervaded everywhere like the smoke emanating from forest-fire the wives of the enemies conquered by him, Naralokavira.

30. The next verse states that Naralokavira erected for the shrine devi (*Tirukkamakkottam*) a high outer-wall of stone, the tower of which touched the clouds.

31. The last verse states that Naralokavira gave a perpetual endowment for the daily supply of oil and milk for children, to signify universal sal motherhood of the goddess. The poet further adds that should receive the first preference of the person who intends charity.

Tamil portion of the inscription gives some further information about Naralokavira; (1) that he covered with gold several parts sabha, (2) that he presented an elephant to the temple, and (3) that he built of stone the temple of *sudalaiyamarnidan* (i.e., He who took His abode at the crematorium), namely Siva, at Tillai.

Sarasvathi pandaram (Library)

There is an evidence of inscription to show that the Chidambaram temple had a library. Two epigraphs gives details about the organization and administration of a Sarasvati Bhandaram on the order of one Pallavadarayan (ARE 168 of 1961-62). Both are damaged only a few details are available. It was originally established by one *Svami devar*. The records furnish a list of twenty scholars in different branches of learning and employed to transcribe texts in Sanskrit and Tamil, they were written down, compared and checked. Puranas and *Jyotisha Sastra* and a work called *Siddhanta Ratnakara* are some of the books referred as present in the Library. *Siddhanta Ratnakara* is said to have been composed by Siva *Isvara* or *Isvara* Siva, son of *Udaiyar Svaimdevar Srikantha deva.* This inscription belongs to the Panday King Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251-1283 AD)

Thanjavur

Brihadisvara Temple

(BIG TEMPLE / PERIYA KOIL)

LOCATION

Thanjavur is the headquarters of Thanjavur district. It is 322km from Chennai. This place is connected via Rail on the Chennai - Tiruchi rail route. The Temple is at 1.5 km from the railway station. The nearest airport is at Tiruchirapalli (60 km). Express buses connect to various other nearby cities.

The Chola king Rajaraja I was a great monarch in the history of South Indian dynasties ruled this area in the medieval period. He constructed the Thanjavur Big temple in the eastern bank of the river Cauvery. This temple was named as Rajarajeswaram after the name of the king Rajaraja ruled from 985 AD to 1014 AD. The construction of the temple was started in his nineteenth regnal year (1003 AD) and completed in the 275th day of his twenty fifth year (1010 AD). It took just six years to complete the work. The inscriptions mention the name of the temple as Thanjaiperuvudaiyar koil in Tamil. In later period during the Maratta rule the temple was named in Sanskrit as Brihadisvaram and presently it is also known as Thanjai Periyakovil (Tanjore Big Temple). In later period Maratta and Nayak rulers constructed various shrines and gopurams.

THE TEMPLE

This temple is rectangular with east to west 240.90 metre long and 120 metre broad in north to south . A moat is seen around the temple outer wall. At the entrance there are two gopuras, widely separated from each other, the first one is larger but the second better decorated. The first one is known as, keralanthakan Tiruvayil and the second one as Rajaraja Tiruvayil. There are

four more small gateways without gopuras around the temple. The temple has central shrine (Garbhagriha), Vestibule (anthralam) Ardhamandapa, Mukhamandapa, Nandi mandapa, Natarajar mandapam; big courtyard with shrines for Amman, Varahi, Subramaniya, Ganapathi and Karuvur devar with a vast courtyard circumscribing ie., Tiruchchurrumaligai (a_columned, raised covered verandha) around the temple, which was built by the commander-in Chief, Krishna Raman of Rajaraja.

From left to right: Flag staff, Nadimandapam, Rajarajan Tiruvayil, Keralanthakan Tiruvayil

KERALANTHAKAN TIRUVAYIL

(First Gopura)

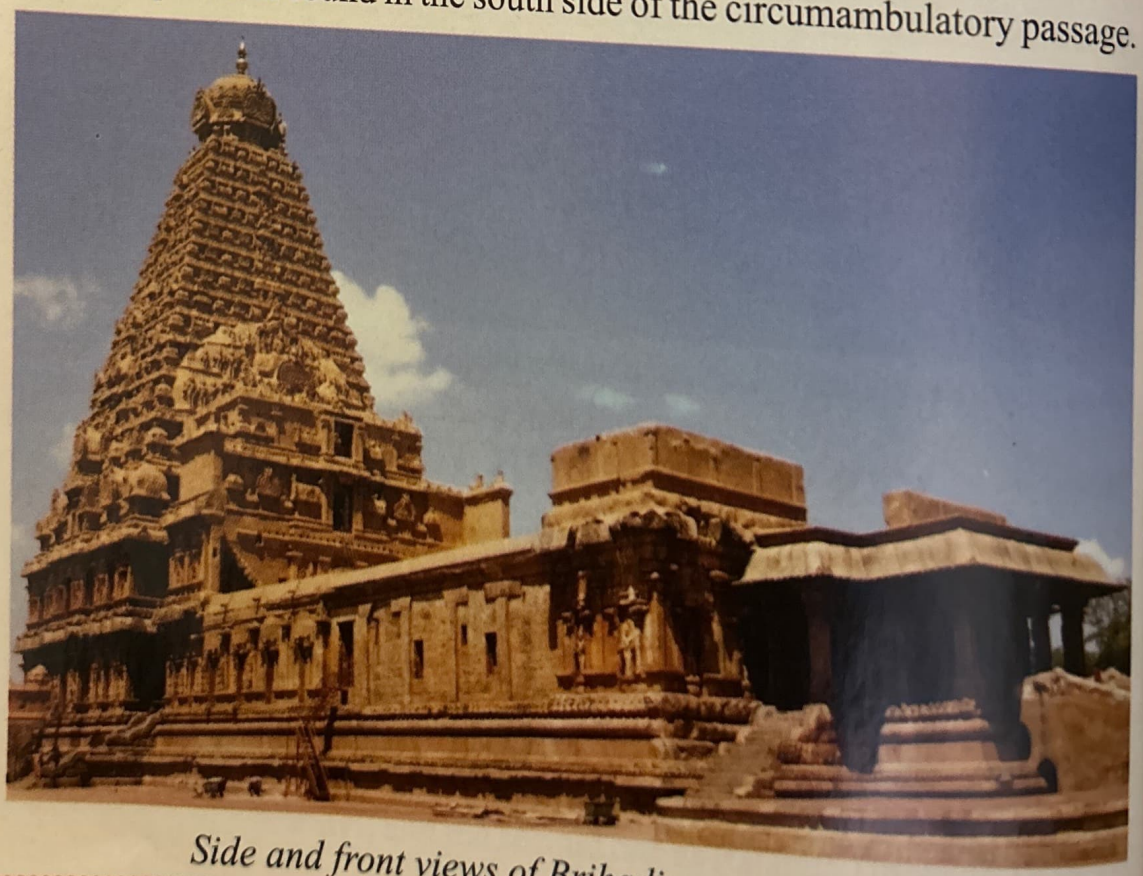
Named after Rajaraja, assumed the title as keralanthaka, after his victory over the then kerala king Baskaravivarman. The lower portion was constructed with stone while the upper portion with brick and stucco. This was built slightly later than the Rajarajan thiruvasal

RAJARAJAN TIRUVAYIL (Second Group)

Front view of Nandi installed by Rajaraja

The innermost gateway is called as Rajarajan Tiruvayil. Three tired structure with full of sculptures representing the puranic stories like marriage of Shiva with Parvathi (Kalyanasundara), Shiva as protector of saint Markandeya (Markandeya anugraha murti), Kiratarjuniyam etc.

Beyond these gopuras, facing the central shrine under the canopy of a mandapa with plain 16 pillars Nayaka rules of Thanjavur in the 16th century AD is a huge monolithic Nandi; the height of which is more than 3.66m.; 5.94mm in length and 2.59m in breadth. The Nandi of Chola period is found in the south side of the circumambulatory passage.

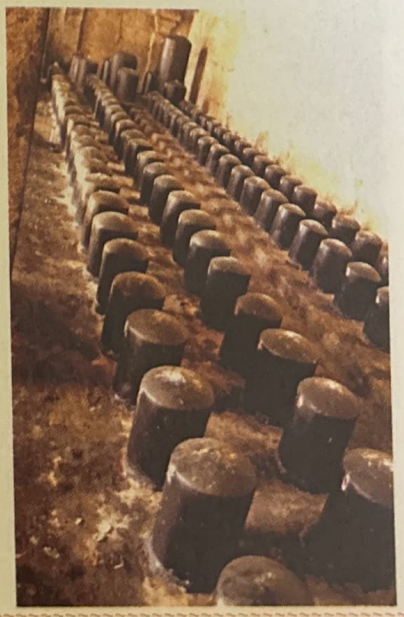


Side and front views of Brihadisvaram, Thanjavur

The central tower called as Vimana. It is constructed with granite from the basement (upapidam) to the top (stupi) it is; 60.96m (216 feet) high and has 13 tires. The Nandis are shown seated on sideways in the Vimana. The vast inner courtyard of the temple is about 152.40x76.20 meter and is surrounded by a cloister. The plinth of the central shrine is 45.72 square meters; the shrine proper is 30.48 square meter. The inscription of Rajaraja is present throughout the massive plinth.

Lingas in the Circumambulatory

THE GOD AND GODDESS IMAGES IN THE NICHES



There are niches of three sides in two rows, containing representation of deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and Durga. The niches housed with the deities in turn flanked by a group of sculptures of Ganesa, Vishnu with his consorts Sri devi and Bhu devi; Lakshmi, a pair of Dvarapalas, Vishnuanugrahamurti, Bhikshatana, Virabhadra, a pair Dvarapalas,

Dakshinamurti, Kalantaka and Nataraja are seen.

In the lower niches on the west there are images of Hari-Hara, Ardhanarisvara, a pair of dvara-palas and two Chandrasekharas, one with and the other without halo. On the north in the lower series, the depiction of Ardhanarisvara, Gangadhara, a pair of dvarpalas, Virabhadra (with a sword and shield), Alingana - Chandrasekhara, Shiva holding a Sula (spear), a pair of dvara-palas, Sarasvati, Mahishasuramardini and Bhairava are

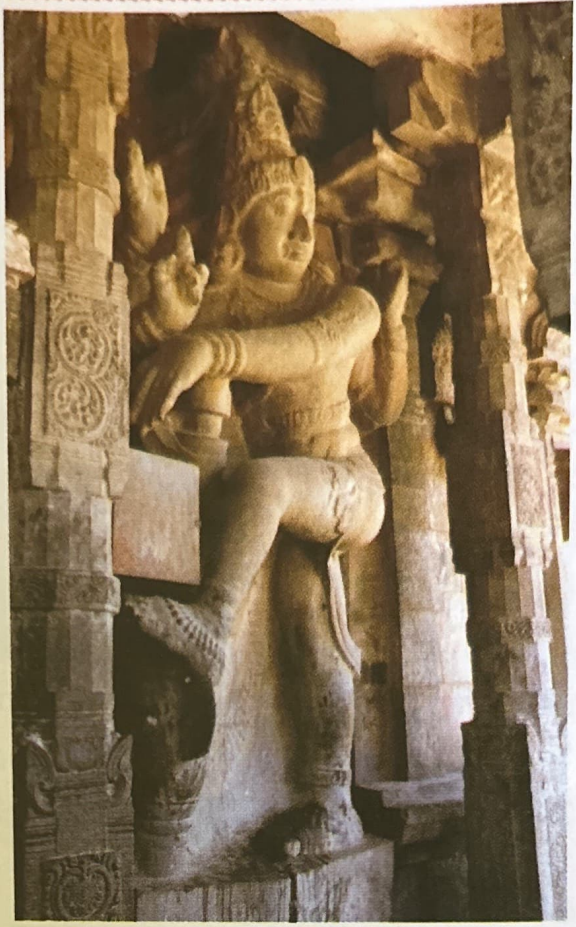
Tiruchurrumaligai or Circumambulatory

noteworthy to admire the artistic skill of the sculptors. The top series shows a number of Tripurantakas repeated in each niche. In the small circular space of the top of the niches the carvings of Ganesa, Vrishavahana, Bhikshatana, Narasimha, Varaha, are present.

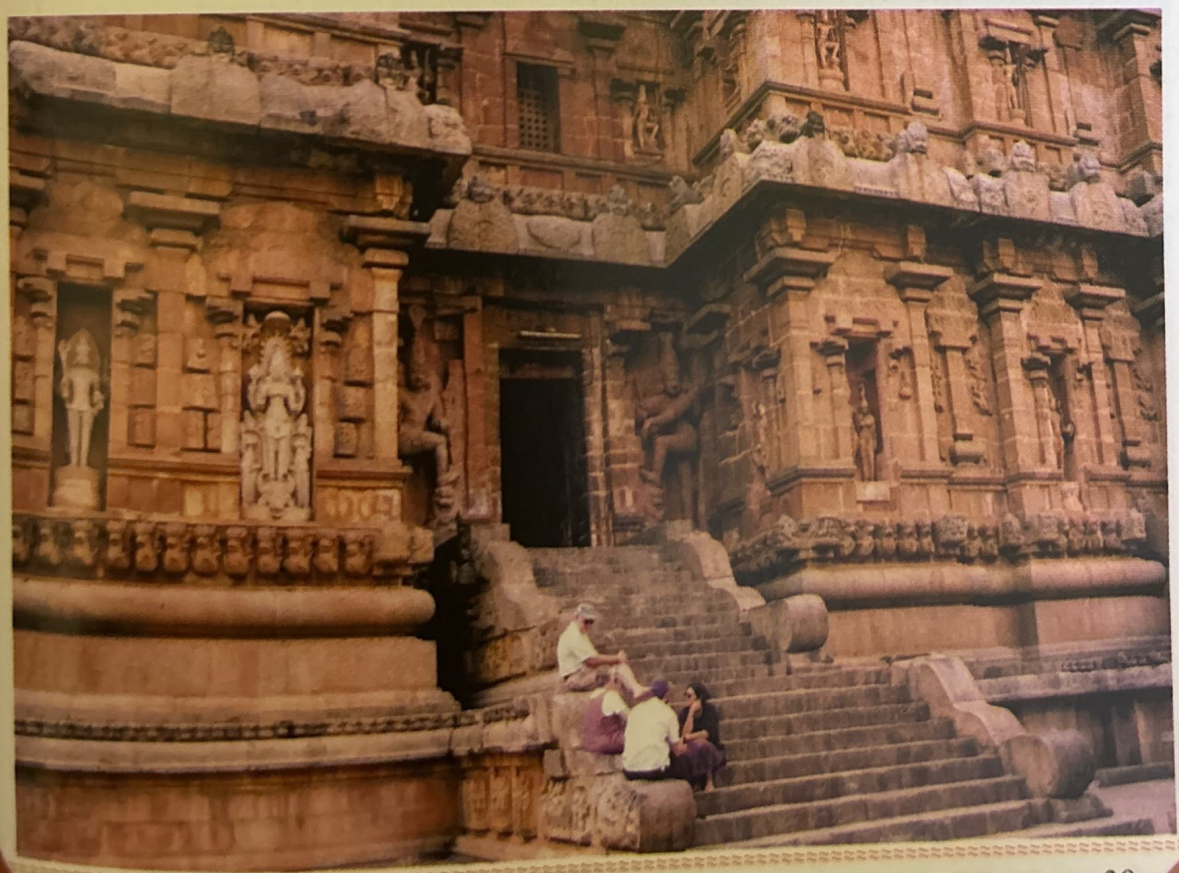
As we enter the temple from the east, there is a flight of steps, leading to a pillared mandapa, which is a later addition. Originally the dvarpalas on both sides and the warriors in the niches are seemed to be facing the visitor. Apart from the mandapa and the steps leading to it, there are two other flights of steps on either side towards north and south directions. The sanctum sanctorum is a rectangular shaped mandapa.

The God in the Linga form in the central shrine was known in inscriptions as Adavallan, Dakshina meru vitankan, and named after Rajaraja, the constructor of the temple as Rajarajesvaramudaiyar.

Above the sanctum is enclosed by an inner wall; between the inner and outer wall there is an intervening passage running all around and they in turn joined at the top by a series of corbelling. These two walls provide support to the massive super structure. There are three colossal sculptures, respectively located in the south, west and north and representing Shiva as holding a spear (Rudramurti); Shiva with ten arms dancing in the chatura pose as Vishnu plays the drum and Devi sits in padmasana with a lotus-bud and rosary in her hands and seated Devi Manonmani carrying a sword and trident and present in the dark passage surrounding the sanctum.



Dwarabala on the sides of the entrance of Sanctum Sanctorrum



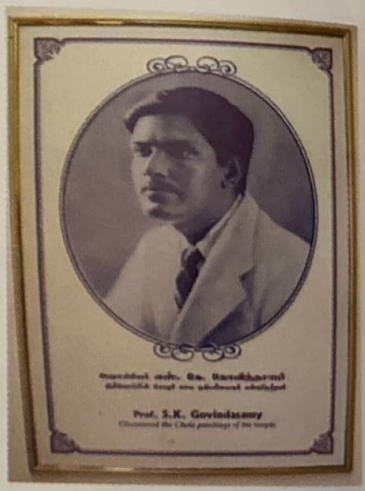
View of the inner vimana

The spherical shaped Sikhara is made up of many pieces of cut stones as that of a peeled orange fruit. The final stupi is plated with gold and has the inscription of Tanjavur Maratta king. It is shaped like a lotus bud.

The entire wall space and ceiling of the passage were originally covered with exquisite paintings, now obscured by a coat of the Nayaka period paintings in the seventeenth century AD. The original paintings have almost been exposed. In the year 1930 AD the Chola period paintings were discovered by Professor S.K. Govindaswamy.

THE PAINTINGS

On the western side, the entire wall-space is occupied by a huge panel in which Shiva as Dahshinamurti is shown seated on tiger-skin in a yogic pose with yoga-pata across his waist and right knee under the banyan tree. Bhairava with dog and the Sanagathi Munies the four disciples of Shiva are seen in the panel with animals and birds.



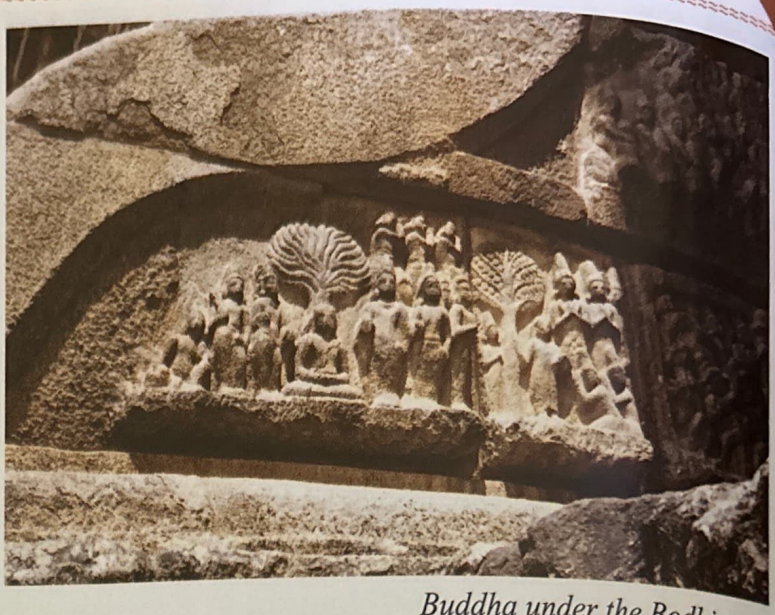
Prof. S.K. Govindaswamy

Very interesting panel is the marriage of scene of Sundara; Lord Shiva appears in the guise of old man with documental evidence in his hand to establish his right to carry away Sundara on his marriage-day to his abode of Tiruvennainallur. Still below this the depiction of a lively scene of women cooking and food being served during the marriage ceremony is also noteworthy. The painting of two saints, Sundara and Cheraman rushing towards the Mount Kailash on elephant and horseback respectively shows the momentum in the action. The two apsaras (Celestial nymphs), ganas

Marriage Scene of Saiva Saint Sundarar

and other celestial musicians play on the drum and other music instruments, where in Vishnu along with Shiva and Parvathi and with the Shiva ganas witness the scene with joy.

Some of the Chola period paintings



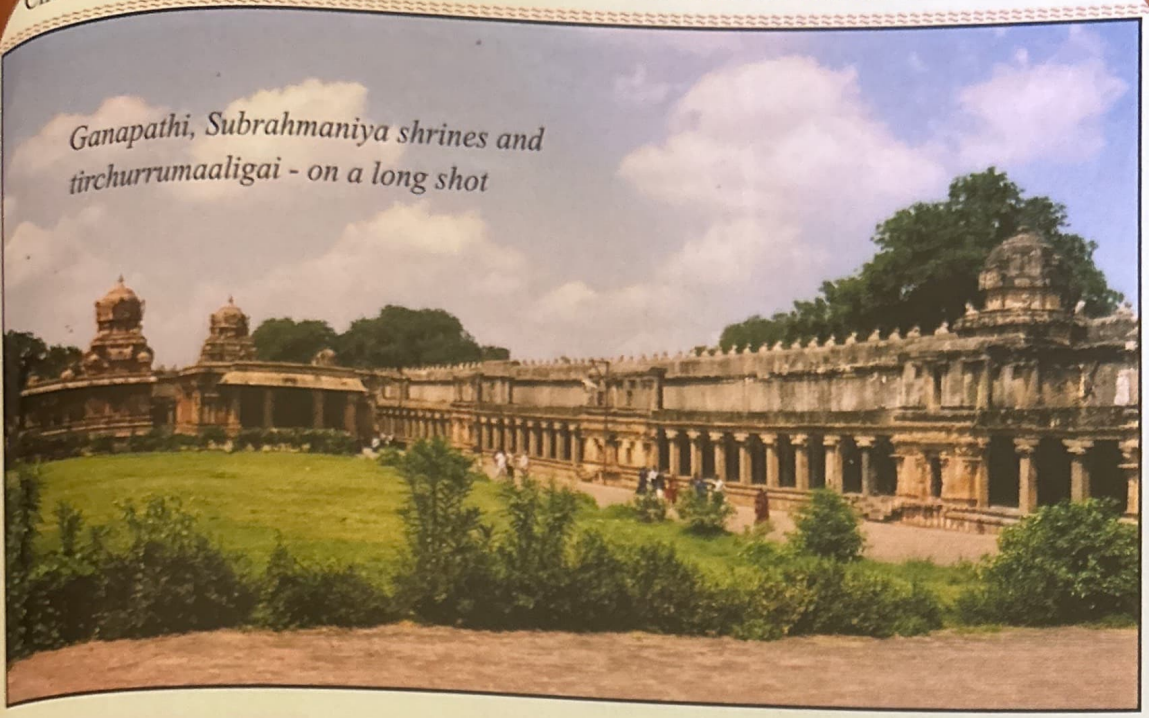
Buddha under the Bodhi tree

Beyond this, on the other side of the wall, is a large figure of Nataraja dancing in the golden hall at Chidambaram with priests and other devotees on one side, Rajaraja and three of this queens with followers and other attendants seen on other side. A little further up is Rajaraja shown worshipping the Linga in the Tanjavur temple.

The next panel in North west corner is the scene of four disciples Sanga, Sanathana, Sanathana and Sanathkumara the ardent disciples of Lord Dakhinmurti are painted gracefully.

The entire northern wall is covered by a figure of Tripurantaka on a chariot driven by Bramha, Kartikeya, Ganesa, Kali and Nandi with their respective vahanas peacock, mouse, lion etc., The painting speaks itself the grandeur, rhythm and artistic skill of the Chola artist in the art of painting.

Beautifully carved kratarjuniyam scene and other sculptures - on the side wall

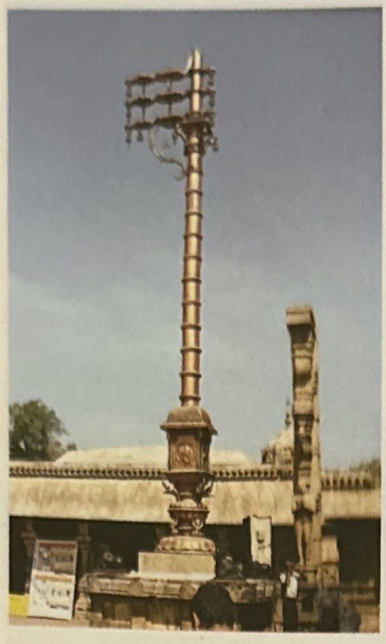


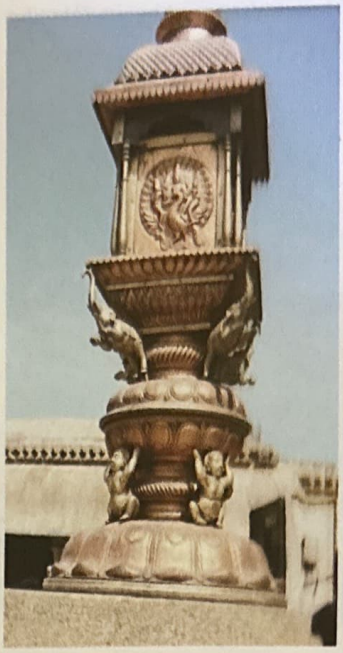
Ganapathi, Subrahmaniya shrines and tirchurrumaaligai - on a long shot

The performing art like dance is revealed in the fine series of the one hundred and eight dance-poses carved all around the inner wall of the first floor of the temple. Here Shiva himself is depicted as the dancer. The temple of Devi near the Nandi-mandapa is said to be constructed during the time of Konerinmaikondan a Pandya king of the thirteenth century AD; but the recent conservation work by Archaeological Survey of India revealed an inscription of Rajaraja stating that the Kamakottam i.e., Devi temple was built by him. The Subrahmanya temple was built during the Nayaka period in the seventeenth Century AD. The shrine Ganesa and the mandapa of Nataraja are built during the Maratta period.

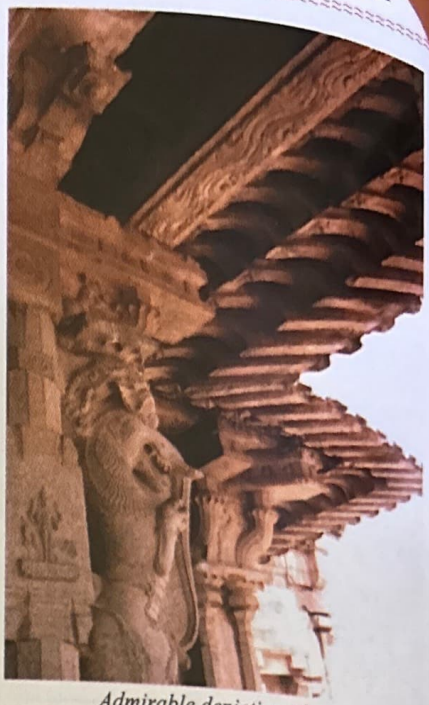
Karuvur Devar

Sri Varaaghi

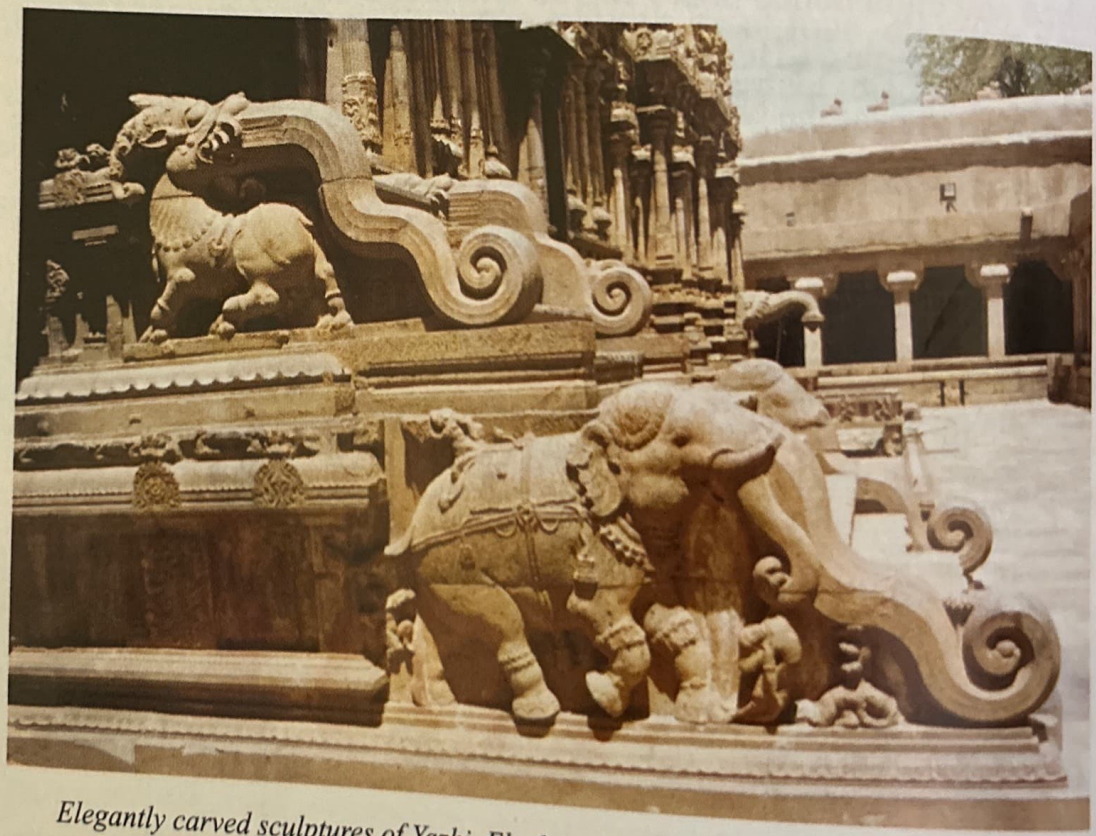




Flag staff - in front of the temple & designs in the base of the flag staff



Admirable depiction of wood like kodungai portion



Elegantly carved sculptures of Yazhi, Elephant and men - on the side wall of the steps

DO YOU KNOW?

There was a saying in the 20th century CE that these European Sculptures belong to the period of Rajaraja I; as there was prediction that the Europeans

will be coming to Tamil Nadu. But this has been proved wrong. Because, the Danish East India Company was established at Tranquebar, Nagappatinam district after getting permission from the Nayaka ruler Ragunatha Nayaka. The sculptors of this period saw the unusual dress worn by the Danish merchants and sculptured these images in the temple Vimana.

WHETHER THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLE FALLS	It is true every day in the morning and evening the shadow of the Vimana of this temple falls on the ground.

Epigraphs from Big temple:

Tanjavur big temple have mostly mentions the donations made by the king, his family members and the nobility; it also provides a detailed list of the metallic images set up in the temple by way of giving descriptions of their size shape and composition; a full record of all the ornaments and jewellery gifted to the icons; the names and designations of the temple officers, servants, the place from where they are hailing, their wages and remuneration etc., the builder of this temple Rajaraja made systematic arrangements for the daily administration as well as at festive occasions. It is noteworthy to mention the meticulous engraving of even the names of streets in which the officials and the temple servants lived, illustrate Rajaraja's management skill.

The inscriptions appear on the northern wall of the sanctum which enumerates the gifts made by the king the members of the royal household and his officers, to the temple from 275th day of his 25th regnal (ruling) year to his 29th year. On the 20th day of his 26th year he had passed a decree that says;

"Let the gifts we gave, our sisters gave, our wives gave and what others gave

to the sacred temple of stones, Sri Rajarajesvaram, which we built in Thanjavur be engrave on the Sri Vimana in stone."

Donation of lamp to the temple was considered as auspicious in those days. The emperor Rajaraja made sufficient arrangements for lighting up lamp in the temple during the day and night as well as on festival occasions . For this purpose king selected shepherds in Thanjavur and other nearby places, provided them with liberal donations both in cash and in kind to maintain the flocks of cattle and supply ghee (clarified butter) to the oil lamps of the temple. it had been calculated that a single night lamp required one ulakku of ghee and to supply this quantity, 96 goats, 48 cows or 16 buffaloes were necessary. The king made arrangements for the stay of the shepherd; the inscription mention the name of the streets wherein the shepherds lived. From the epigraphs it is understood the naming patter, layout of the streets and the towns during period of Rajaraja.

There are also inscriptions of Vijayanagar and Nayaka period found in the big temple. The first one dated on 1455 AD engraved on the south wall of the central shrine relates to an order of Saluva Tirumalai to several Agarams (Brahman villages) remitting a number of taxes on them. One among the beneficiary village mentioned in the inscription was Tanjamamani. (presently a temple by this name Tanjai mamani is located on the bank of the Vennar to the north of the Thanjavur).

Another inscription in the shrine of goddess records that one Puliyurar was given the right to receive sacred food in the Periyaudaiya nayanar temple as he supplied stones and rendered some service to build (or repair) two mandapas called Mallappa Nayakkar mandapam and Murtti amman mandapam. From this inscription it is understood that the big temple was known as Peiyaudaiya nayanar, (at present locally it is called as Periyakoil).

Another epigraph of Achchutappa Nayakkar is found on the wall of the second Gopura , the king gives an order remitting taxes on the gold smiths of Thanjavur The inscription mentions a name Kandanolu Narayakkurunatan. Kandanolu might be identified with that of present Kurnool in Andhra.

Gangaikondacholapuram

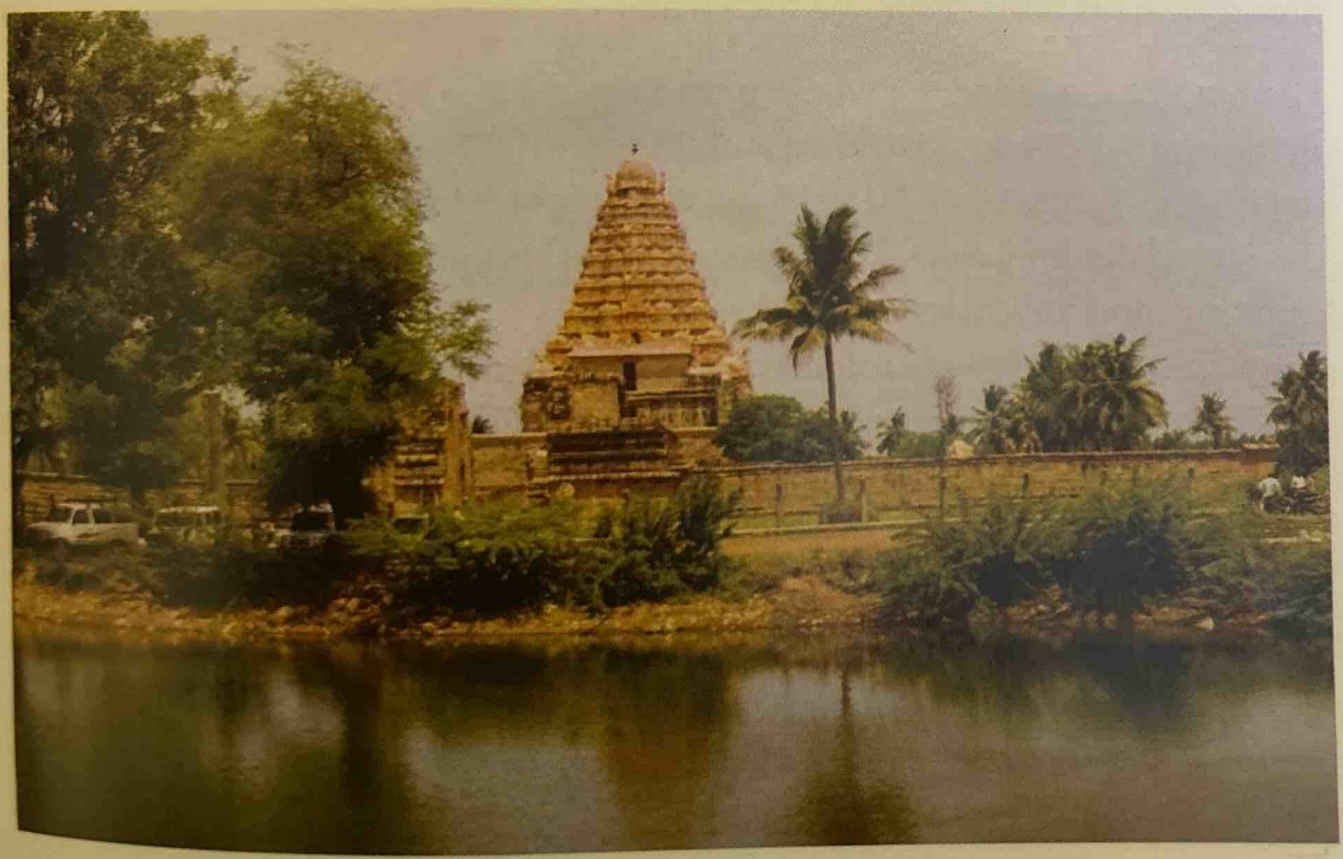
GANGAIKONDACHOLESVRAM
BRIHADIVARA TEMPLE

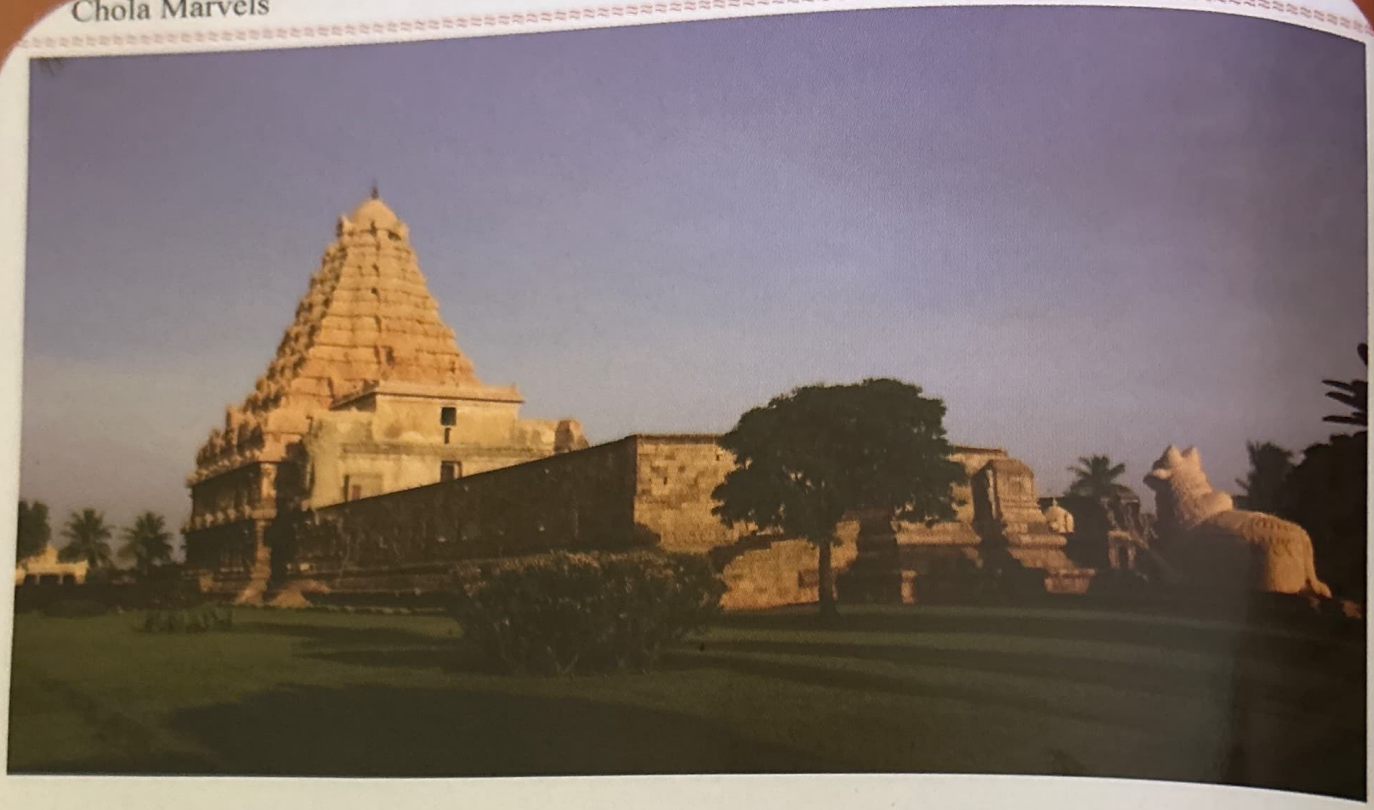
LOCATION

Situated in Udayarpalayam taluk of Ariyalur district. The nearest airport is at Trichy. The nearest railway station is at Kumbakonam. By Road: Gangaikondacholapuram is 61 km northeast of Thanjavur and 35km northeast of kumbakonam. It is well connected by road to Tirchy (102 kms) and Chidambaram 41kms)

THE TEMPLE

The builder of this great temple is Rajendra Chola (1012 - 1044 CE).



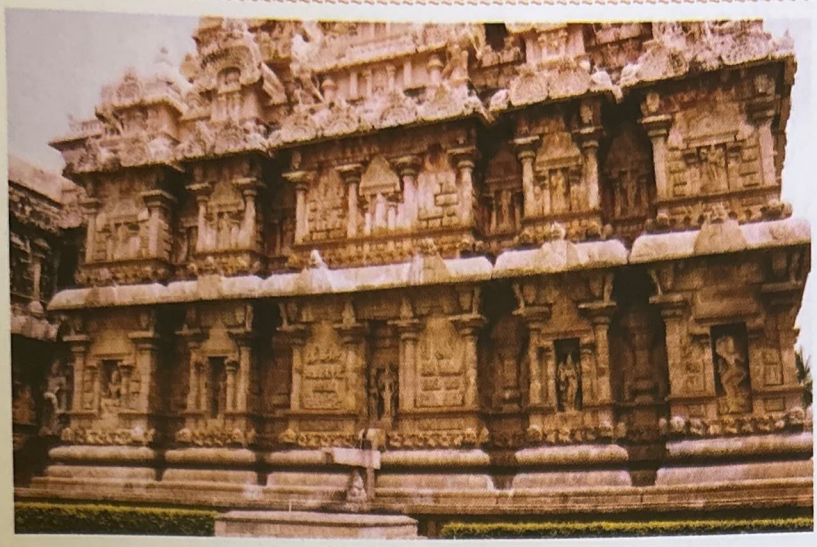


Rajendra Chola-I, Son of Rajaraja-I through his queen Vanavan Madevi also called as Tribhuvanamadevi established this temple after his victorious march to river Ganges. He was originally called as Madurantakan. He assumed the title of Rajendra during his coronation and continued to rule along with his father Rajaraja for a while.

His empire extended the whole of Southern India up to river Thungabathra in the north. For administrative and strategic purpose he built another capital apart from Tanjavur and named it as Gangaikondacholapuram. He also dug the huge lake known as Cholagangam that spreads 22 km mainly used for drinking and irrigation. It is also locally known as ponneri in Tamil language which means Golden Lake. The temple consists of three storeys and surrounded by a huge fort, the stones from the ruined outer wall was used by the British officials for construction of the Lower Anicut (Dam across river kollidam) nearby.

COMPARISON WITH THANJAVUR TEMPLE

The temple was located at the centre of the city and occupies around six acres of land. There seems to be two Praharas surrounding the Srivimana. The second wall has the gopuram completely destructed. Renovating the Srivimana. The Archaeological Survey of India maintains it beautifully. A



western art historian Percy Brown who studied Gangaikonda cholesvaram temple compared the structural difference of this Srivimana with that of Rajaraja -I's Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur in his book on Indian Architecture Buddhist and Hindu periods states that There is a voluptuousness in the later structure (Gangaikondacholapuram temple) the beauty of ripe feminity, in contrast to the masculine strength of the earlier type (Thanjavur temple). Each is the final and absolute vision of its creator made manifest through the medium of structural form..."In this naked eye the visitor of these temples can see the difference as mentioned by Percy Brown. The main difference between the two is that this Srivimana has eight sided (Octgonal) and Thanjavur Srivimana has four sided (Quadragonal) in structure.

The basement of Srivimana is 100 feet by 100 feet and the foundation is square in structure and raises 20 feet above the ground level. The three lower tiers house many masterpiece sculptures of Chola period including the Lakshmi, Gana Saraswathi, Ardhanarisvarar (Shiva and Parvathi in equal but in one form), and Shiva along with Parvathi blessing Chandikesvara. There are many shrine inside this temple found on the second praharam, Mahisasuuramardhini shrine, Ammm shrine, Chandigesvarar shrine Ganapathy shrine etc. There was Nataraja mandapam now totally destroyed and only the remains are found.

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GOPURA

The entrance tower in the east has only basement portion: the superstructure are completely fallen down. The stones from this ruined Gopura were used for the construction of the lower Anaicut dam nearby.

Detailed exposure of Sri vimana

NANDI

A large size nandi is found on a pedestal inside the court facing the main sanctum, which is made up of brick and stucco.

SIMHAKENI (LION WELL)

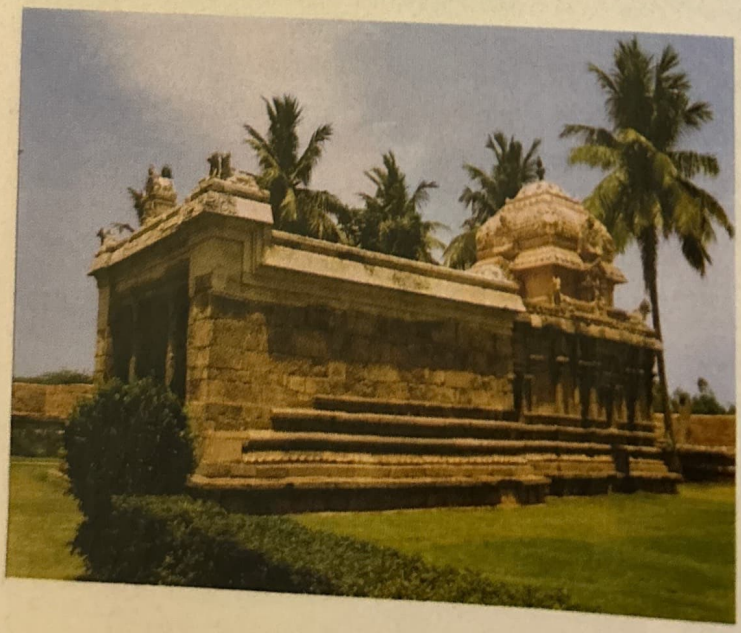
A circular well adorned with a lion structure at the entrance is known as Simhakeni. There is a traditional saying that the king Rajendra I brought the Ganges river water after his famous expedition and poured it into this well. An insciption on the sculpture in 19th century CE characters records that is was constructed by the Zamindar of Udiyarpalaiyam.

DAVARAPALAS (GATEKEEPERS)

The guardian deities of the entrance of the temples are called as Dvarapalas. The Agamic text mentions four pairs of Daavarapalas, each one of them guarding the entrance of the cardinal directions respectively: East Nandi & Mahakala: South Herambha and Bhringi: West : Durmukah

and Pandura and North: Sita and Asita: A Pair of Dvarapalas stands at the entrance of the mahamandapa and to the mukamandapa.

SUB SHRINES



There are two sub shrines on either side of the main shrine. The shrine south is called as southern kailasa or Ten Kailasa: while in the northern side is known as Vada kailasa or Uttara kailasa. Both of them face the east and originally dedicated to Shiva later on when the importance for the

worship of goddess by constructing a separate shrine was came in to existence the Vada or uttara kailasa was converted into an Amman Shrine, Brhannayaki.

Both these sub shrines have a sanctum preceded by a front mandapa (aradhamandapa) with side steps. A bigger mandapa known as mahamandap is present in front of this mandapa.

The shrine to the west of the lion well is dedicated to the Goddess Mahisasuramardhini, was the later addition of 15th century CE. Stylistically the goddess resembles that of Chalukayan kingdom.

A separate shrine for Chadikesavara is present in the north, east of the central shrine, in whose name all transactions relating to the Shiva temples are made.

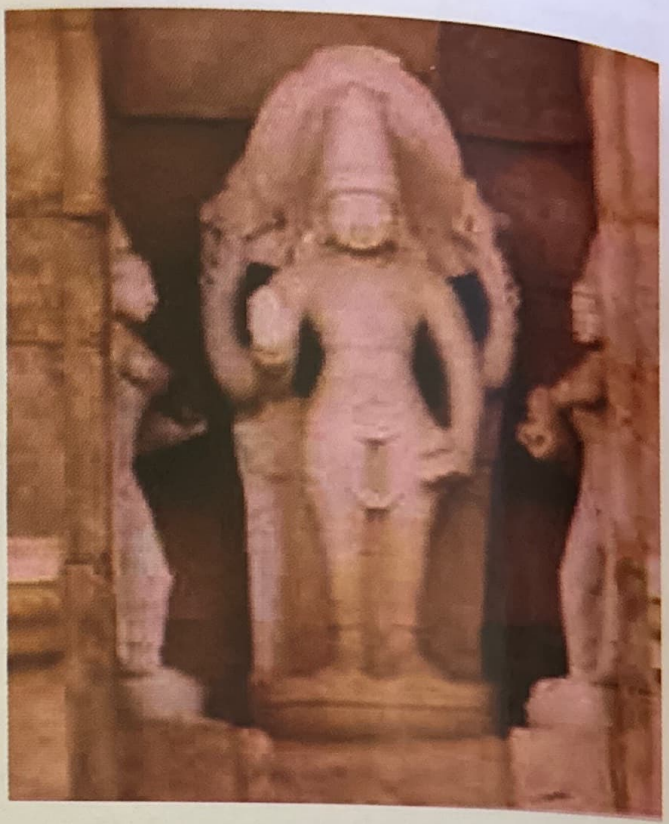
The act of benevolence shown by Shiva to Chandesvara is depicted in this sculpture.

Majestically seated Shiva's lower right hand garlands the head of Chandesvara, while the left upper hand holding the end of a flower garland tying it round the head of Chandesvara: upper right hand holds axe (Parasu), while the lower left hand not visible might be holding deer. Chandesvara is piously seated in worshiping (anjali) posture with folded hands. Bhudhaganas are seen behind the God. Devi is seen seated near the God.

Is is suggested that the King Rajendra himself has carved his own image and shown his

benevolence to Lord Shiva. This sclpture is regarded as the as the masterpiece of this period Sculptural art by the scholars

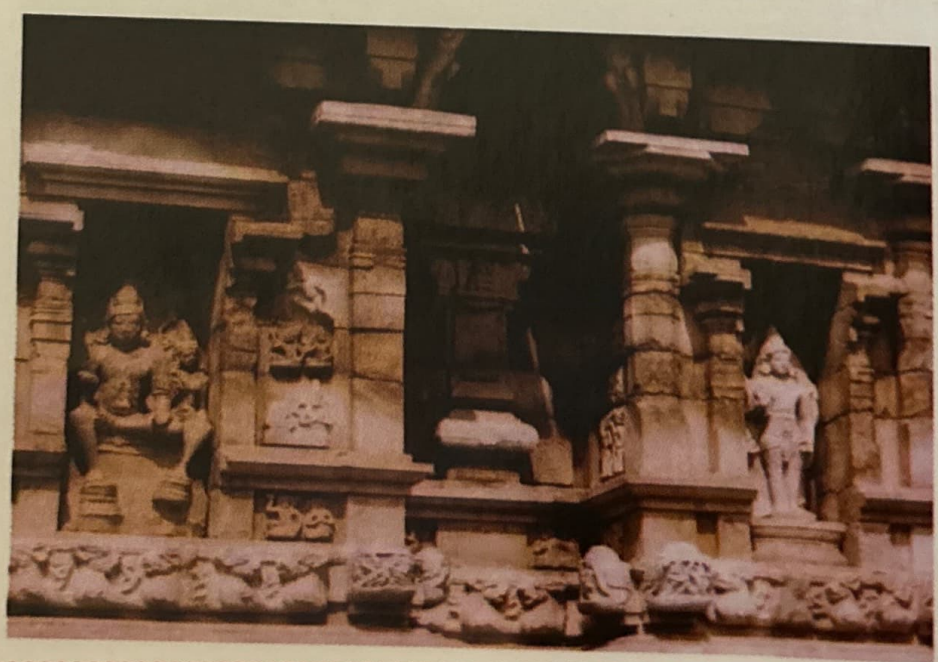
MAHAVISHNU



Standing figure of Vishnu with four arms: the upper two arms hold discus in the right and conch in the left respectively, the lower right arm is in abhaya pose while the left rests on the thigh. Sri devi with two arms present in the right side while on the left Bhu devi is present also with two arms. Surya and Chandra on either side of the top side walls, devas in the middle and sages at the bottom are seen.

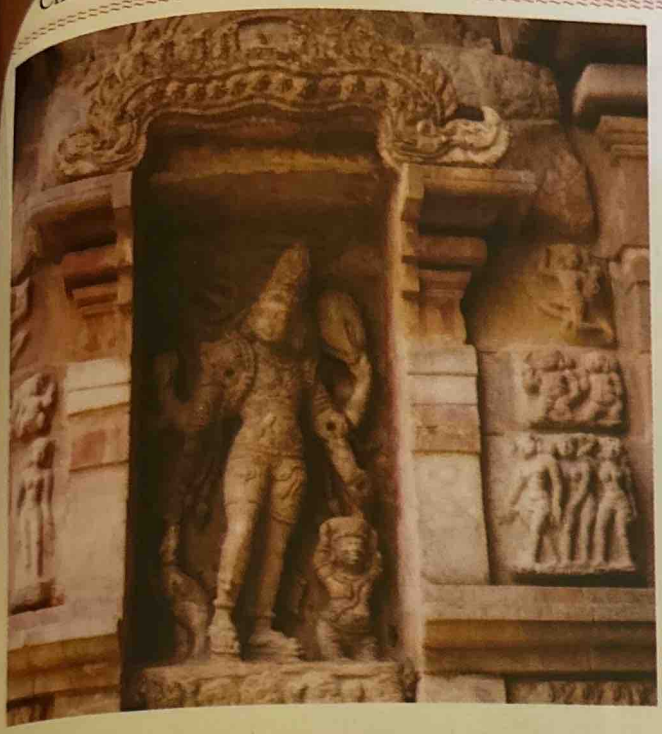
VISHNUANUGRAHA MURTHI

Shiva and Parvathy represented in the seated position on a pedestal. Shiva is shown with four arms carrying Parasu (axe), antelope in the upper right and the left arms respectively, while the left arm is placed on his thigh: the right holding Chakra.



SUBRAMANYA

The Subramanya figure is seen in the west wall standing with four arms carrying Sakti and Vajra in the upper arms while the lower right is in abhaya pose and the left thigh. A Chennavira (the chest belt worn by the



heroes) is shown across his chest and the prominent garland of kanni flower are shown below the crown.

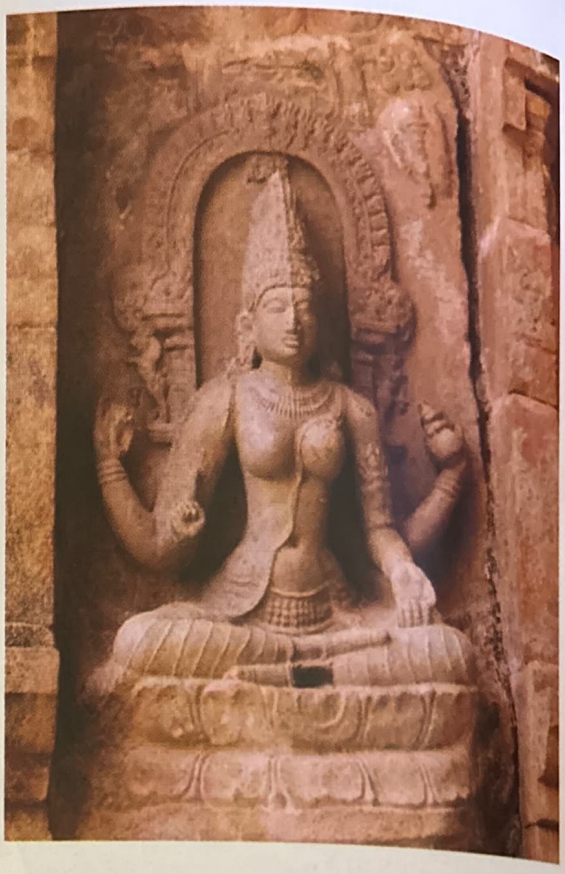
KANKALADHARA

Shiva is standing in a tribhanga pose with six arms, the upper right arm, holds a snake, the middle one feeds the deer (antelope) and the lower one playing on udukkai or damaru is broken. The upper left arm holds a trident across the back with a chowri hanging: the middle one is placed on the head of a dwarf standing by the side and the bottom holding the udukkai is broken. Pair of sandals adorn the feet. On the wall to the right of Shiva, Surya on top; Bhutaganas in the middle and wives of sages at the bottom are shown. While on to the left of Shiva. Chandra on top, ganas in the middle and wives of sages at the bottom are present. The makara torana above this niche carries a bas relief of Uma mahesvara in the centre.

LAKSHMI

In the South side of the mahamadapa in the west wall is an image of Goddess Lakshmi seated on a lotus throne with two arms. Devi holds lotus flowers in her arms: above her are shown two elephants pouring water from pots held in their trunks.

SARASWATHI



Facing towards Chandesanugrahamurti on the west wall of the Mahamandapa is the figure of Saraswathi the Goddess of Knowledge. She is seen seated on a lotus throne with four arms; holding a rossary of beads and an amrta kalasa in the upper arms and a palm leaf and Chinmudra pose in the lower ones; behind her is shown a prabha, aureole.

BRAHMA

Four armed standing three headed (the fourth headed at the back not being visible) and bearded figure of Brahma standing erect position; holding sruk and sruva (sacrificial ladles and spoons for pouring oblations of ghee) in the upper right arm and a rossary of beads in the lower right; a

bunch of dharbha grass in the upper left; a kamandala in the lower left. His two devis are present on either side with two hands; goddess Saraswathi on right side holds a bunch of palm leaves in her left arm, in the left goddess Savitri is present. In the side walls Surya, Chandra, devas and sages are present.

KAMANTAKA

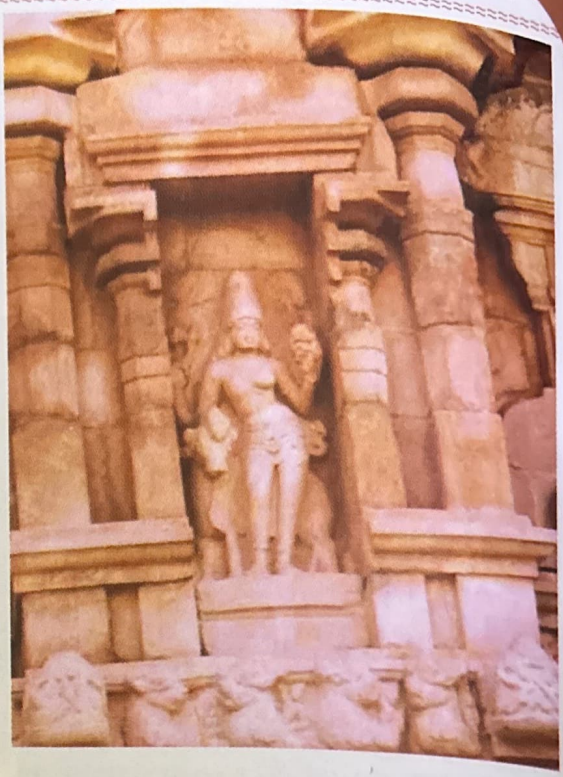
Seated figure with four arms right upper arm holds a rossary while lower arm pointing down. The left upper arm holds a chouri and the lower is placed on thigh. In the right side wall a sage is shown in penance attitude; two devotees are shown below him. On the left side at the top Manmatha the God of love is shown aiming an arrow at Shiva. Two devotees are shown in the middle; Manmatha and Rathi are seen below the devotees.

BHAIRAVA

Standing with eight arms in naked position wearing garland of skulls, round eyes protruded teeth, hair show like a flame, holding trident, parasu, sword and noose in his right arm; fire, kapala, khatvanga and bell in his left arm and a coil of snake shown around his thighs.

ARDHANARISVARA

A Standing in tribhanga pose with three arms; two are in the right side



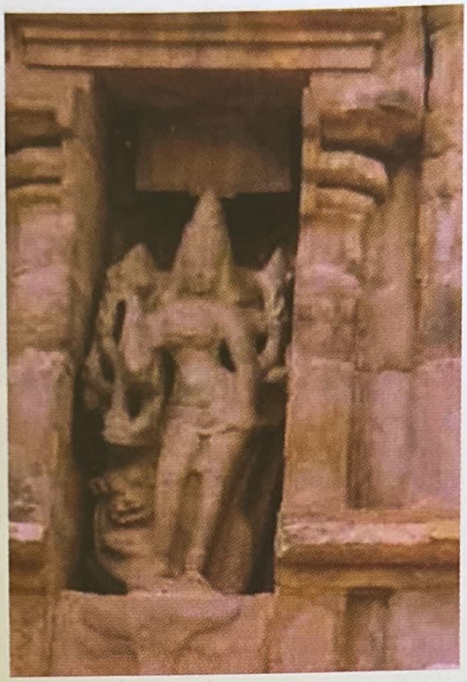
and one in the left; the upper right holds a parasu, while the lower right rests on the head of a bull standing beside Him. Left arm holding a flower, nilotpal and a parrot is seen pecking the pollen. The right side of the head is adorned with a jatamakuta and the left with a kesabandha. A lion pendent ear ring is seen on the right ear while a roll or pendent is seen in the left ear. A parasol above and a fly whisk on either side are shown. The breast is shown on the left emphasizing the feminine aspect. The left side wears a sari extending upto the knee. The right part wears the tiger skin. Both the masculine firmness and feminine tenderness visualized in the same face which is the salient feature of this sculpture.

KALANDHAKA

Four armed Shiva shown in such a way destroying kala, right leg placed on kala and with the left pressing him down. The upper right arm holds parasu is about to strike, while the lower right holds the trident, the upper left holds a deer (antelope) and the lower left points to kala.

Surya and Chandra are shown at the top and devotees in one side. Another side shown Markandeya, devotee of Lord

Shiva worshipping Linga and the God of death, Yama dragging him forcibly with a rope.



DURGA

The Goddess standing with eight arms holding discus, arrow, sword and abhaya in the right arms and conch, bow, shield in the left arms respectively and the one hand is on her thigh. A buffalo head is shown below and lion stands behind her.

NATARAJA

Four armed dancing Shiva, holding drum in the upper right arm and showing Abhaya pose bestowing palm on the lower right. The upper left arm carries fire and the lower left is throwing across the body in gajahasta. The matted hair locks are depicted flying on either side. On the right side of the matted hair river Ganga is shown. By the left side of the leg is shown dancing Kali, carrying drum, sword, trident, abhaya, dandhasta in her hands. A three legged figure, probably representing Bhringi is seen on the right. Below the feet is shown the women saint Karaikkal ammayar. She is holding a musical instrument called as kinkini. Three Ganas are also shown playing symbols and drum. On the west side wall is shown Surya on top. subhrahmanya seated on peacock is shown flying;

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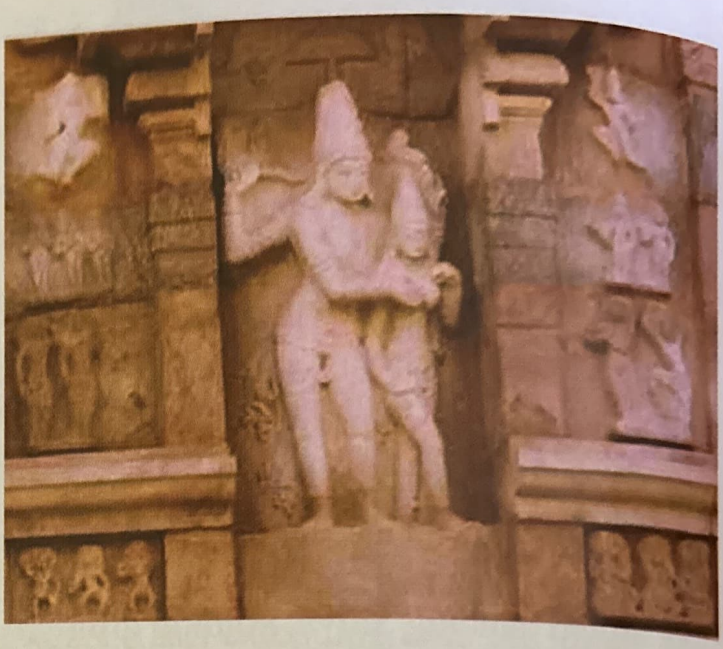
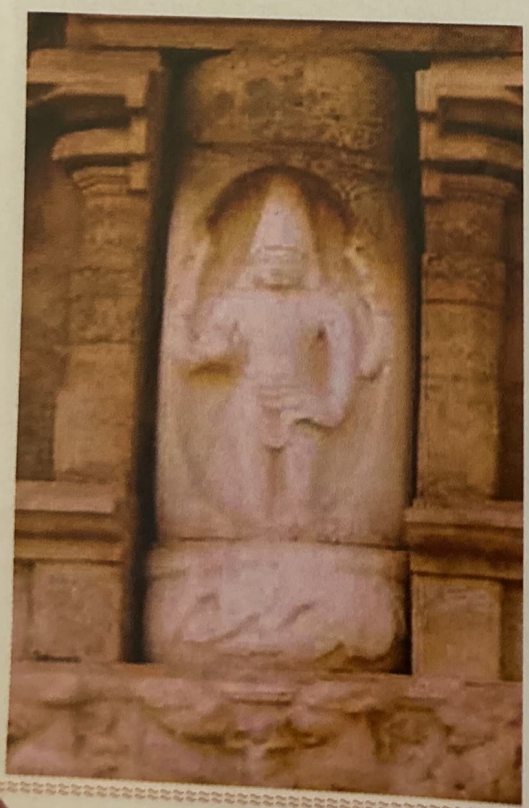
Ganapati moves on his rat. Further down is four armed Nadikesvara playing drum. Chandra is sown on the top on the side wall to the east. Two armed Goddess Parvati is leaning on a bull looking majestically; she holds lotus in her right arm.



GANGADHARA

Four armed standing figure of Shiva, embracing and pacifying Parvathi standing by his side. The upper right arm of Shiva receives the falling river Ganga from his matted lock; the lower right moves gently around parvathi. The upper left arm holds usual attributes of Shiva upper arm holds deer; the left is placed on the thigh. The right arm of the Devi is placed on her thigh while left is bent. Three rows of miniature sculptures are noticed on the side walls. Surya is shown on top of the wall right of Shiva; Devas are in the middle and two devotees at the bottom. In the left wall Chandra is seen at the top, devotees in the middle and Bhagiratha doing penance in the lower part.



LINGODHBAHAVA

Four armed standing figure of Lingodhbhava coming out from the shaft of fire. The right upper arm holds axe and the lower is in the abhaya pose; the left upper holds deer and the lower is placed on the thigh. The leg below the ankle is hidden, a garland of flowers is shown around the Linga Portion at the top. vishnu as a boar is shown at the bottom in an outline. Brahma as swan is

not represented in the top.

SURYAPITA

The 'Suryapita' with 'Navagrahas'(nine planets), sculpture was brought by Rajendra I as war trophy from Chalukayan territory (Eastern Chalukayas of Kalyani today's Odhissa State) also present in this temple. Sun worship is very famous in Odhissa. This has been witnessed from the existence of world famous Sun temple at Konark, Odhissa.

This Copper plate is from Esalam village, villupuram district. The construction of Gangaikondacholapuram temple by Rajendra I is mentioned in this copper plate.

BRONZE

The bronze image of muruga holds sword, sakti, shield and cock in the hands.

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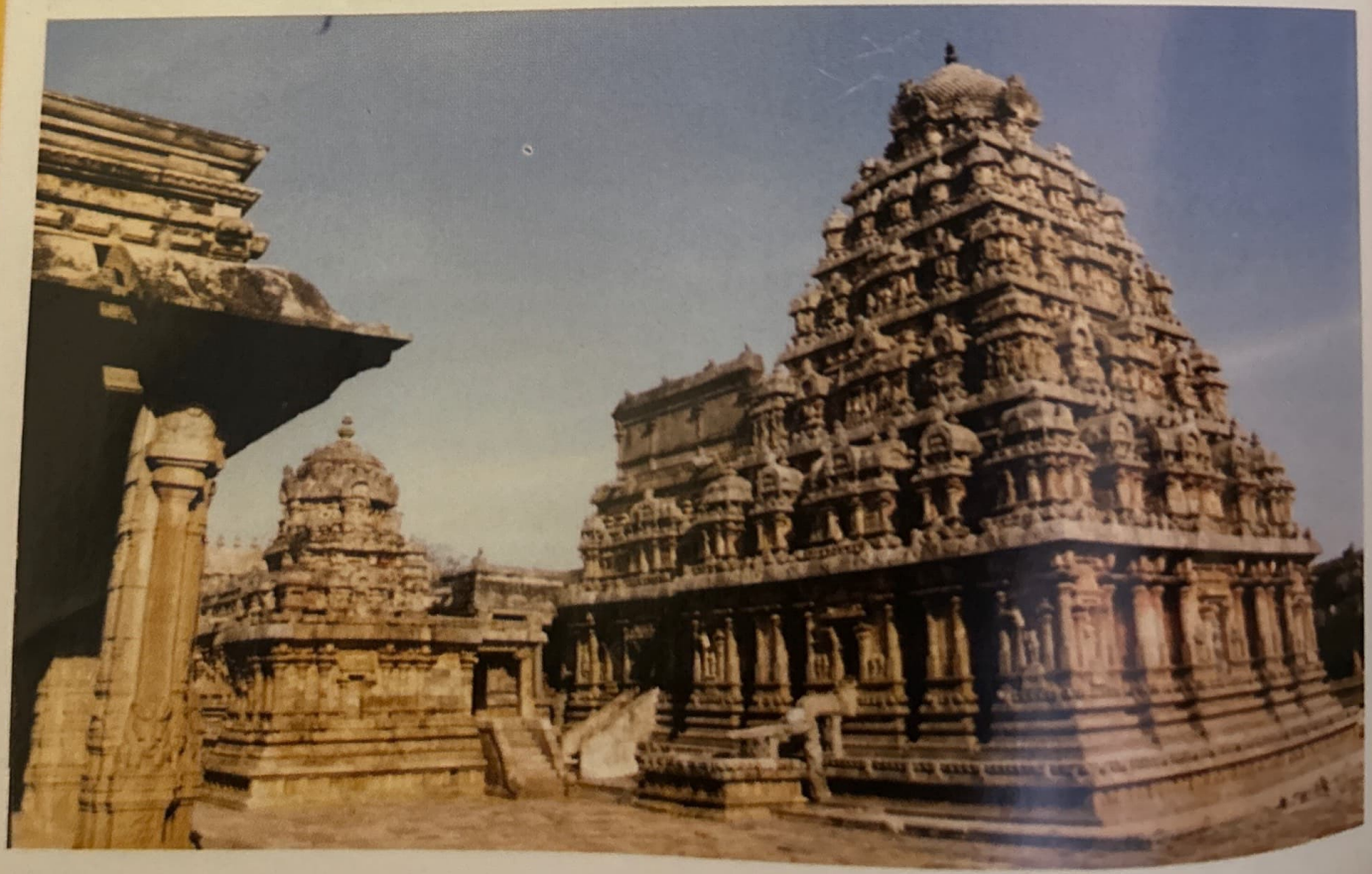
DARASURAM

AIRAVATESVARA TEMPLE

(RAJARAJAESVARAM AT RAJARAJAPURAM)

LOCATION

Three km from Kumbakonam city, on the way to Kumbakonam - Thanjavur bus route. It is about 37 km from Thanjavur city. Nearest Railway station is Darasuram (passenger trains only stop), and Kumbakonam (Express and passenger trains). When a traveller travels by air he/she has to take the route via Tiruchy to Kumbakonam which is at 76 km in distance.



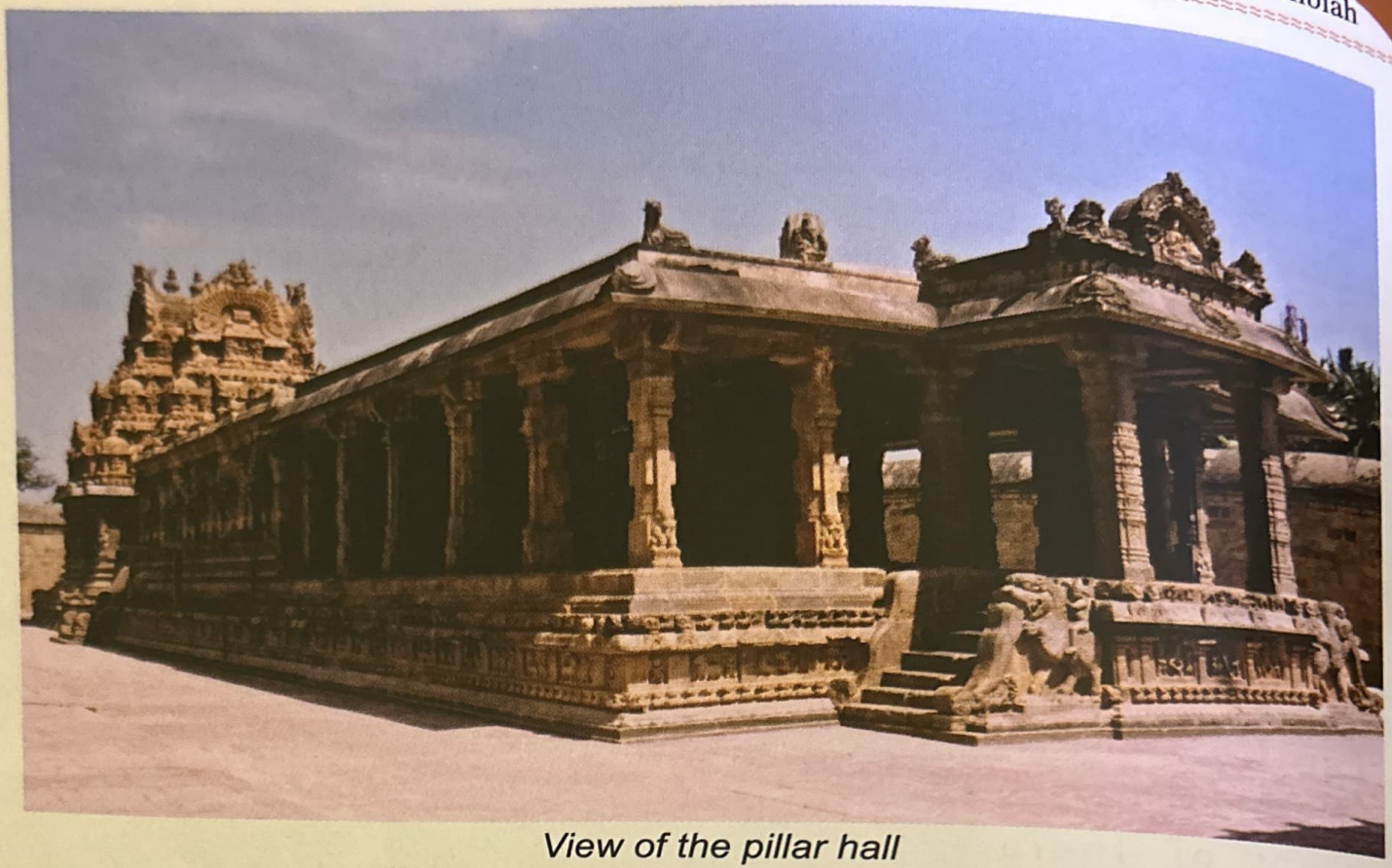
THE TEMPLE

The builder of this great temple is Rajaraja II (1146-1173 CE). This temple was named after the king Rajaraja as Rajarajeswaram and the place as Rajarajapuram. which now changed as Darasuram. The name of the god is Airavartheeswarar. According to the legend, Airavatha the elephant of Indra regained its original colour after a bath in the sacred waters.

The temple tank Yama -theertham is said to be created by god Siva by his trident for the sake of Yama to bathe in and get cured of a curse by sage Durvasa.

The temple complex in high platform enclosed within a massive compound wall measuring 107.50 metres east west and 69.40 metres north south directions. The temple faces the east; the dhvajastambha and the Nandi mandapa are present outside this enclosure. There is a small mandapa, approached by a flight of steps which produces musical notes and known locally as "musical steps".

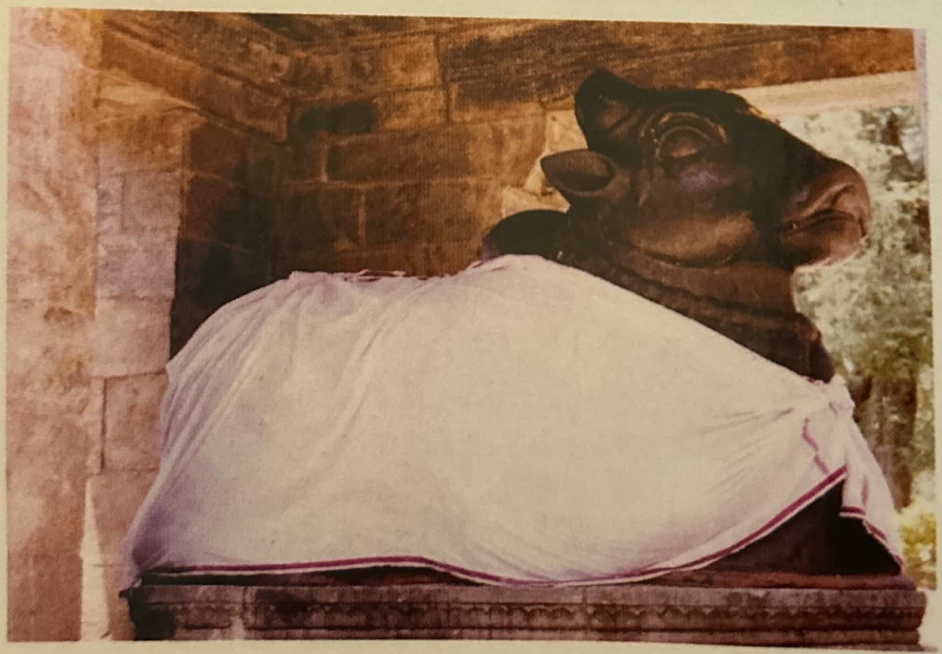
The sailent feature of this temple is the hall Rajagambira (i.e., Rajaraja II) (Tirumandapam). It is conceived as chariot, with artistically and realistically carved out wheels with hubs and spokes, and drawn by horses. The pillars of Rajagambhira hall rise from the heads of the sitting lions and



View of the pillar hall

are crowned and decroated by broad palagais and podigais.

There is a short inscription repeated in the four pillars mentioning the mandapa as *svasti sri* Raja *gambhiram tiur-mandapam*. The rectangular portions of the pillars are decorated with small panels depicting the mythological stories, like the attack of Manmatha, Parvathi's penance,the prayer by the devas, birth of Kumara, Lord Siva's fight with asuras and His marriage with Parvathi.



This entire structure built all at the same time risesfrom a high plinth (upapita) and covers an area approximately 23 meters by 63meters. The grabhagriha is an unencumbered cell of 12 meters square externally, having thick massive walls

on which the vimana tower rises gracefully. There is no circumambulatory passage immediately around the garbhagriha. The ardhamandapa linking the garbagriha to the mukhamandhapa is in two parts. The first chamber, which is close to the sanctum, is a closed one with an entrance from the eastern side only; it is supported by four pillars and has almost all the features of an antarala. The other half of the ardhamandapa is really continuation of the mukhamandapa has two side entrances, resting of four pillars. The entire ardhamandapa measures 12 meters by 17 meters. On the outer face of the wall separating the two

Man riding on Yali

Rajgambihra Hall

Musical steps (iron caged)

Sitting Yali - Base of Pillar

elements of ardhamandapa are two massive and impressive dvarapalas flanking the entrance. The mahamandapa is measuring 23.60 meters by 17.43 meters externally.

This mandapa, which measures 23.60 meters by 21.20 meters externally, is supported by nine north - south rows of ten pillars each.

The main temple rests on a high paltform and the faces of the upapitham. There are named panels depicting scenes from the lives of the saiva saints (Nayanmar) as that of the Tiruttondattogi of Sundarar.

Some of the stories with label will defiantly create interest to the viewers as followers:

These stories are depicted in miniature panel with labels. The devotion shown to Siva by Appar represented with a spud; the story of Ilaiyamarangudi Marar Kadai which describes the food demanded by Lord Siva in the guise of Brahman at midnight; the tale of Kannappanayanar and his ardent devotion to god is illustrated by representing him as plucking his eye with an arrow and offering it; another panel depiction is that the noose of Yama surrounding not only the neck of Markandeya but also the neck of Ling; the label with Tirunalai-povar kadai is about the legend of Nanda who bathed in the tank and entered the fire to reach Chidambaram temple, Lord Siva and Parvathi appear before him on bull: the legend of Tirukkuripputondar, who happen to end his life as he could not full fill the vow of washing the cloths of Saiva devotees; The inscription reads as Saynallurpillaiyar kadai which depict the story of Chandesa and his devotion to Siva. The boy saint Sambandar mentioned as Aludaiya pillaiyar in the inscription and his story; the story of Siruttondar kadai and the label mentions it. The Chera king going to Kailasa on an elephant the label reads as Seramanperumal kadai. There are other stories with labels mentions the activities of the Saiva saints and their devotion to Lord Siva

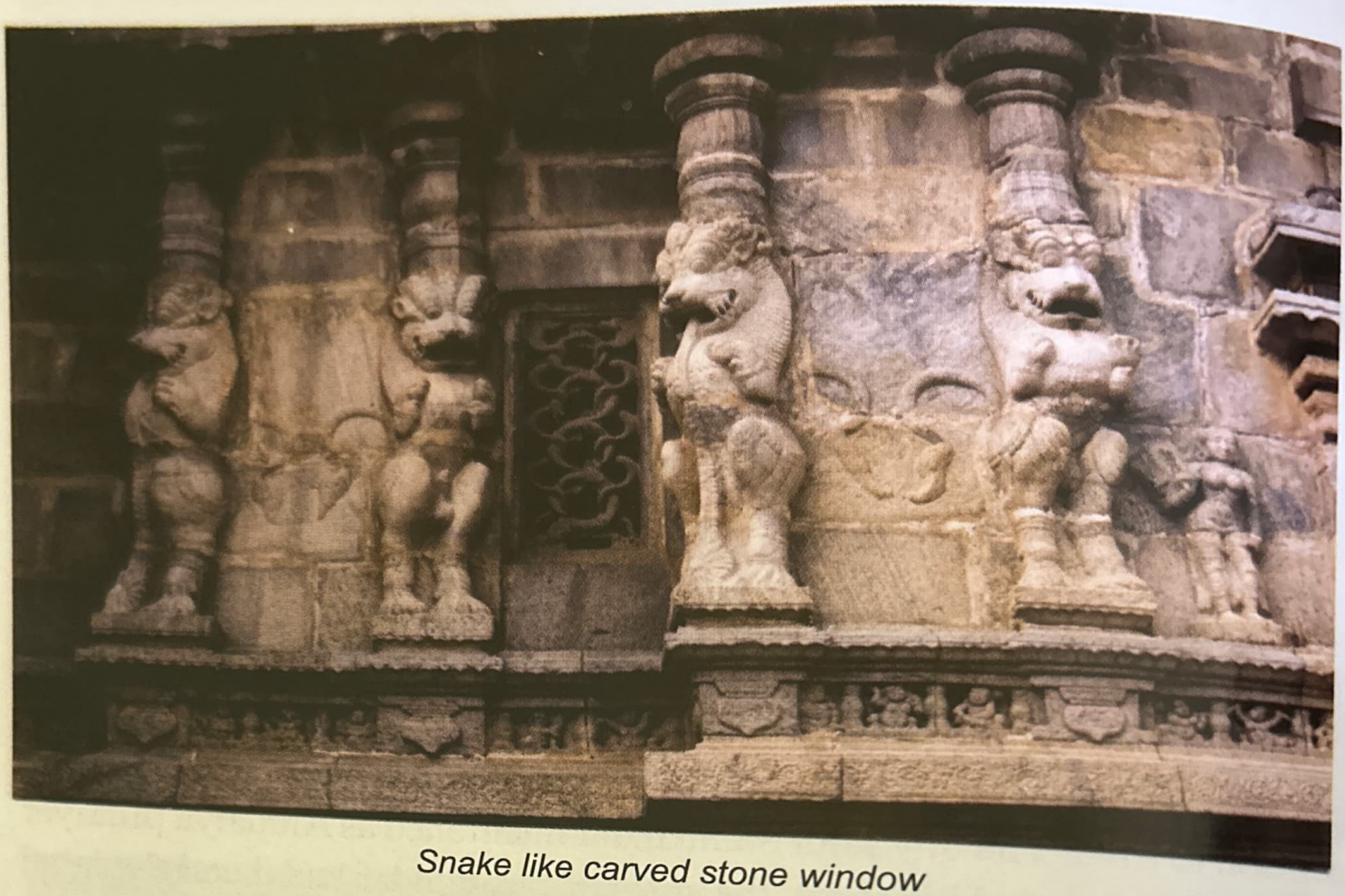
This temple is the master piece in depicting the story of Saiva saints both in panel and inscribed labels. During this period of the builder of the temple the saint minister Sekilar wrote a legendary stories of the Saiva Saints

The Sri vimana has a total height of 83 feet (25.2m.), the super - structure over the Garbhagrha being of height 63.5 feet (19.35m.) and in five talas, crowned by a circular griva and a sikhara. The stupi (finial) is damaged, only the central stem being in position.

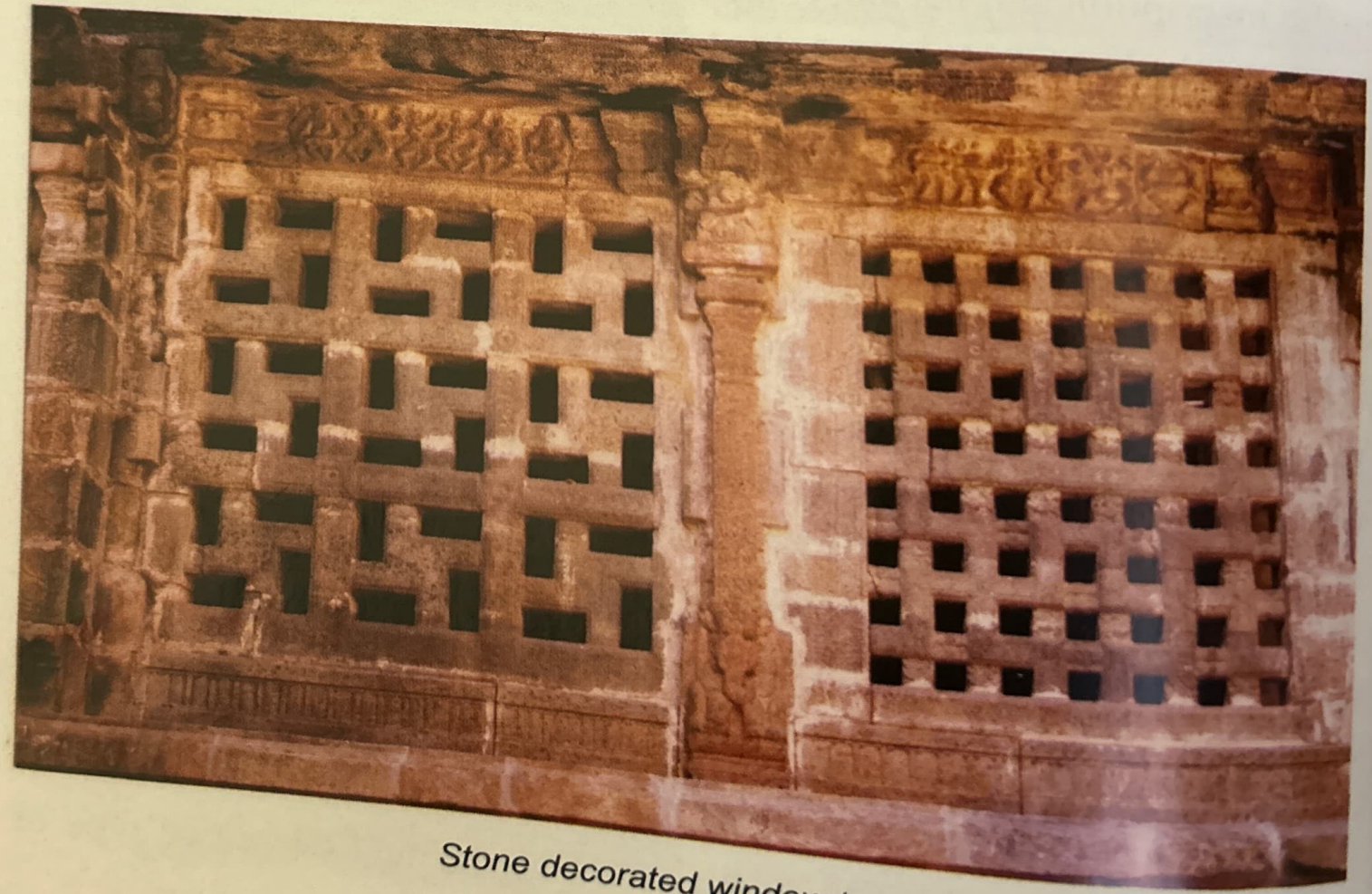
There is only one prakara, which is encompassed by the outer compound wall and the adjoining tiruch - churru - maligai.

The goddess shrine is present in the north

This temple is known for its architectural beauty and decorated type of pillars.

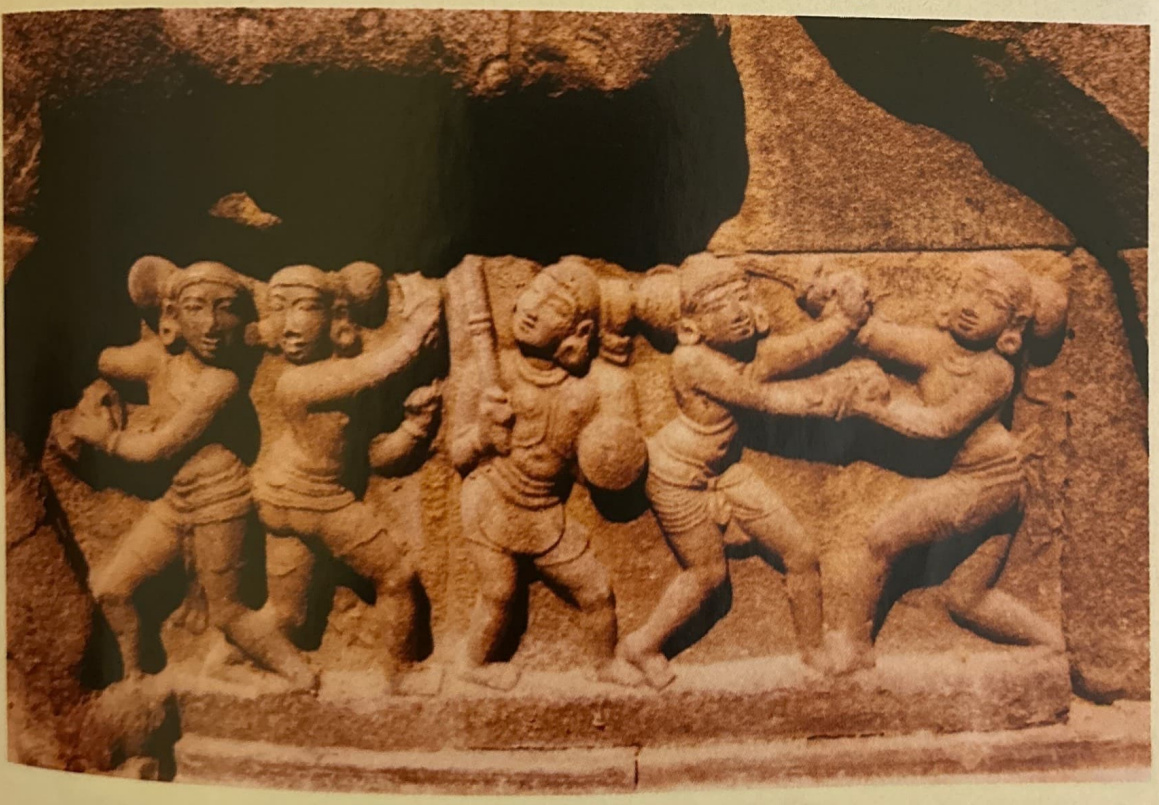


Snake like carved stone window

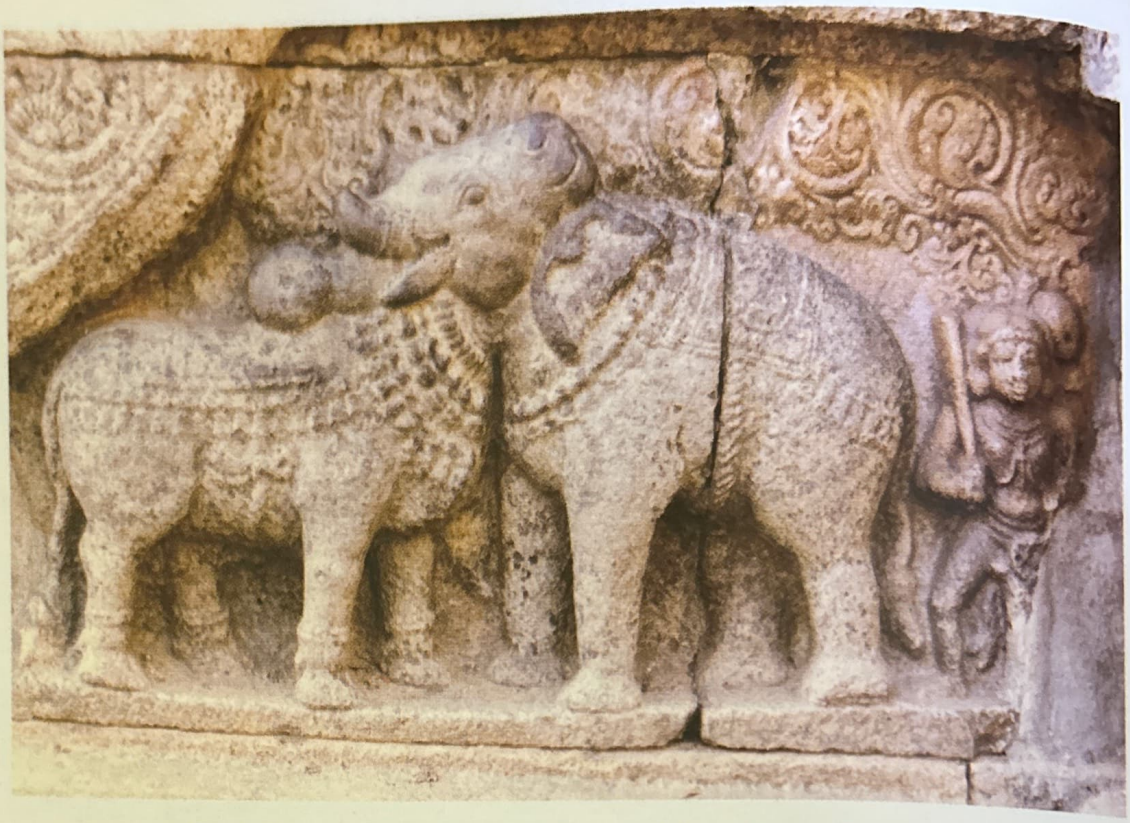


Stone decorated window type

Vaali Vatam



Sculptured depiction of Warriors



Depiction of sculpture revealing both Nandi and Elephant

Sculptor's imaginary dancing poses

THIRUBUVANAM

KAMBAHARESVARAR TEMPLE

LOCATION

Thirubuvanam is located in the Thanjavur District. It is 6 km from Kumbakonam city on Mayiladuthurai (Mayavaram) / Chidambaram bus route (Town bus, Route bus (Muffosal), Mini bus, car, auto facilities are available. Thirubuvanam is also famous for Silk cloth.

THE TEMPLE

Kambaharesvarar Temple was built by the king Kulothunga III (1179 CE 1216 CE).

ARCHITECTURE

The temple have two gopurams and two praharams. The garpagraham, artha mandapam, mahamandapam muhamandapam and Somaskandarmanda pam.

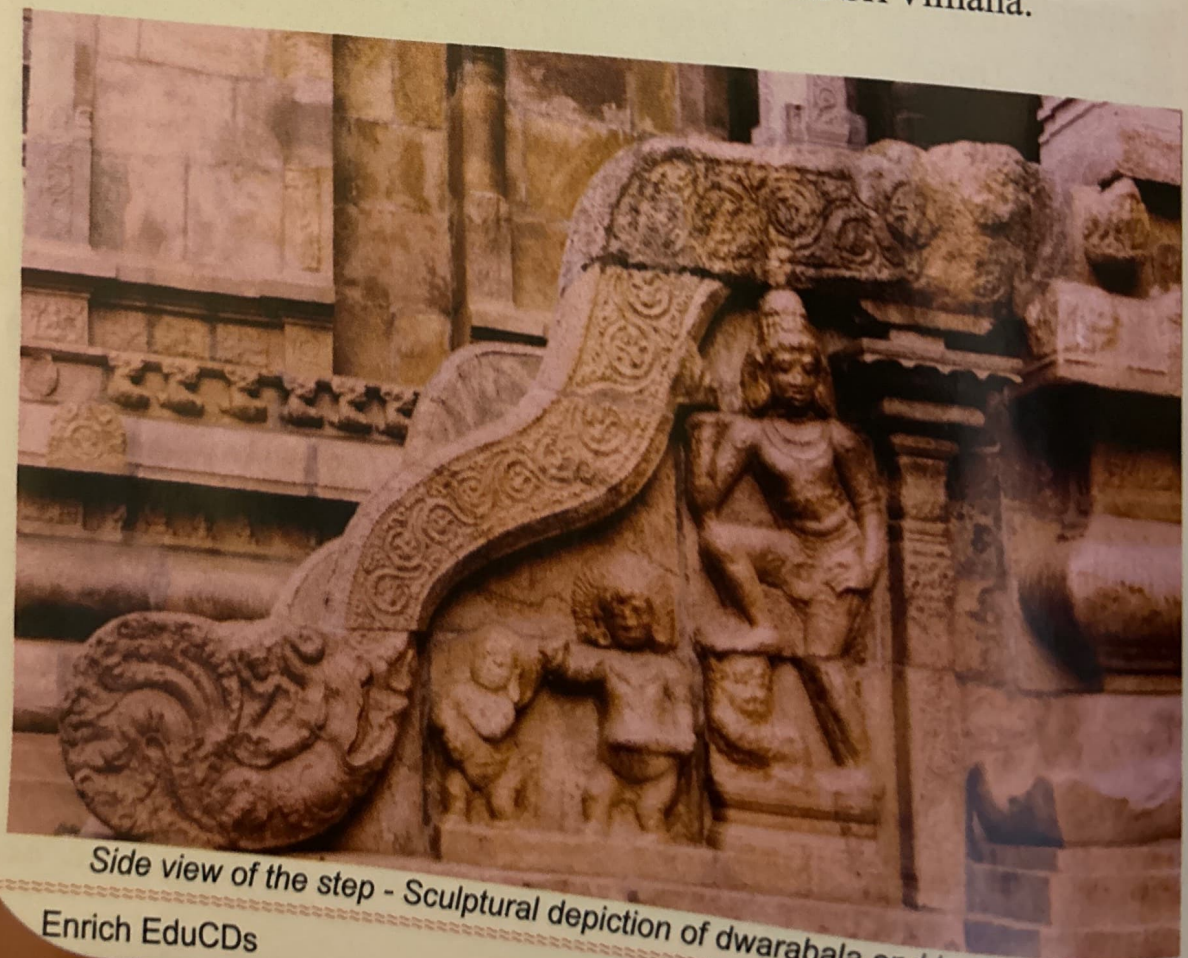
Tribhuvanam, named after the king Kulothunga III who conquered three

worlds. The Tribhuvanaviresvaram at Tribhuvanavirapuram, now shortened as Tribhuvanam, is dedicated to Lord Shiva known as KAMPAHARESVARA.

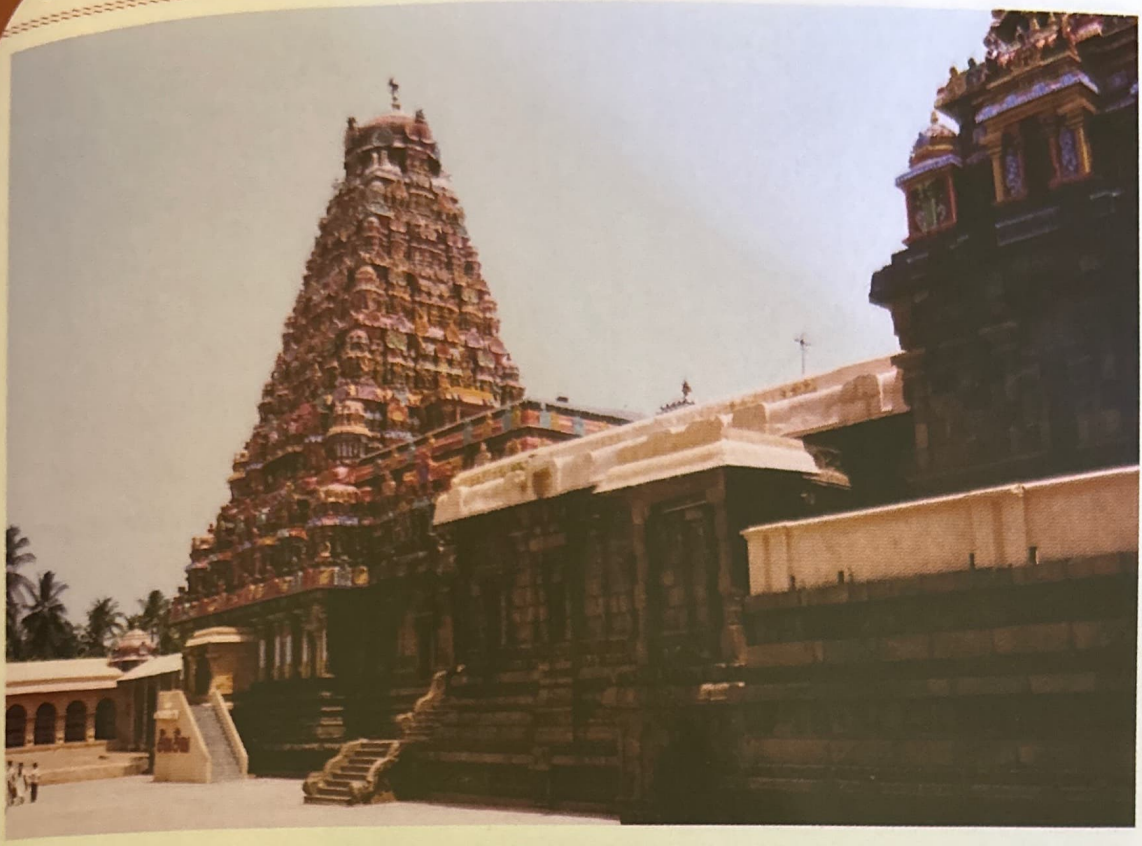
The temple - complex, facing the east, consists of two prakaras, each through a Gopura, not very tall, and a cloister enclosing the main edifice. Between the two prakaras are located the vasanta - mandapa, also known as Alankara - mandapa, meant for placing the deities on festival times. Some dance scenes are seen here. There are many vahanas and various utsava murtis are kept inside the building.

The central shrine, facing east, consists of square garbha - griha carrying a six - storey superstructure, a slightly narrower ardha - mandapa, with flights of steps on either side. Maha - mandapa, mukha - mandapa and a portico of later period are also present in this temple.

The Garbagriha measures 18.29 m externally. This shrine is nirandhara (without circumambulatory path inside). But the walls of the garbagriha is thick to hold the load of the superstructure of the stone Sri Vimana.



Side view of the step - Sculptural depiction of dwarabala and budhaganas



In inner enclosure there are shrines for Devi, Chandesa and Sarabhamurti. All the subsidiary shrines are posed towards the north, while the southern side was reserved for the chariot - shaped mandapa. A cloister, with ornamental base, surrounds the principal as well as the subsidiary shrines.

In the devakoshats; Dakshinamurti on the south, Lingodbhava on the west and Brahma on the north are preent.

In between the intersecting gala - padas run the panels depicting dancing poses, accompanied by drummers and musicians.

The ardha mandapa is slightly narrower than the garbhagriha. Its projecting central bays on the north and the south have a devakoshta with wagon

Man sitting on the tiger's back

Dancing girls

Sri vimana - Back view

vaulted top. The southern koshta is now vacant. The northern one contains an image of six armed Durga standing on the head of Mahisha. The recesses on either side of the devakoshta have jalakas, with a torana top.

Chandeswara Shrine

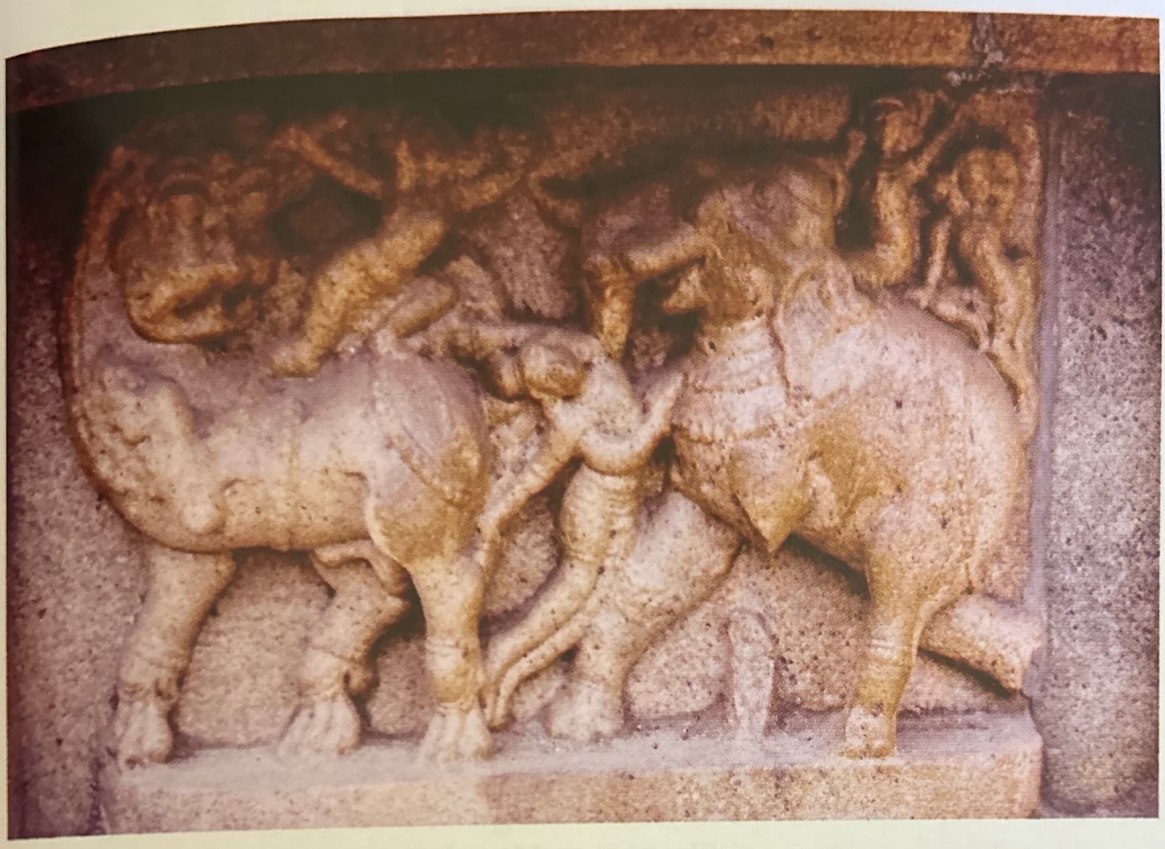
The sarabha shrine is located to the north - east corner of the main temple. It faces south, and the outer walls enclose a smaller temple, enshrining the image of Sarabhamurti.

Bronze image of Srabhamurthi

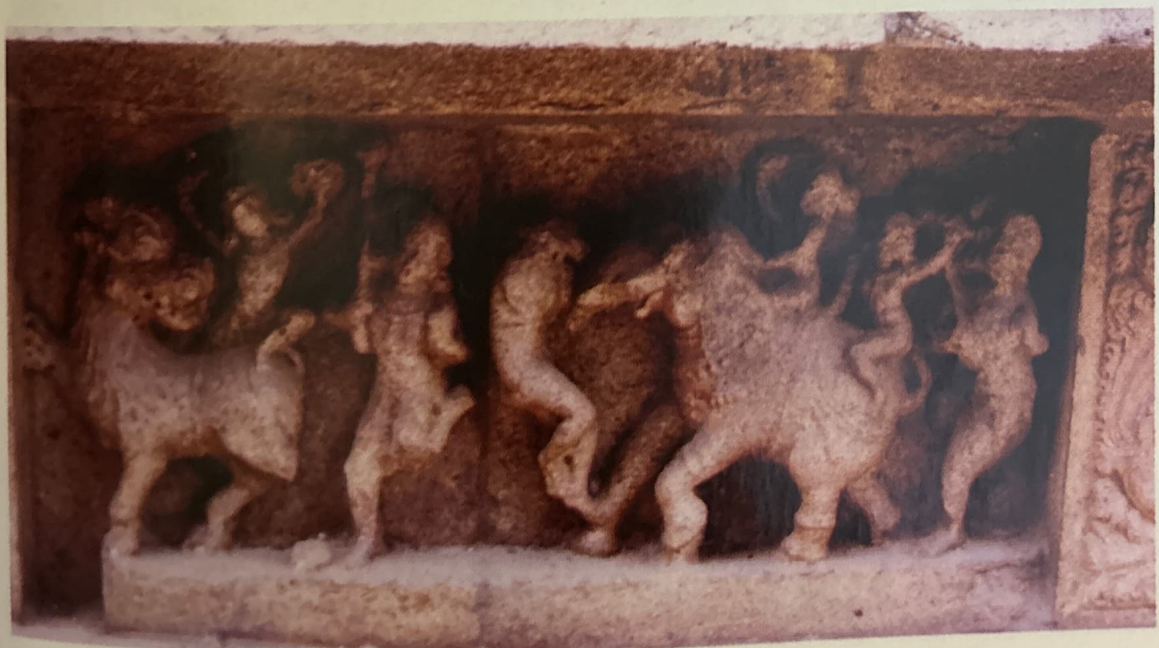
According to Gopinatha Rao, "Sarabha is represented as having three legs, the body and face of alion, a tail and four human arms; inthe right upper hand holds parasu, lower right one has pasa; in the upper left deer and in the lower left agni are other attributes. The front leg has pinioned Narasimha with eight arms.

Dancing girl with two drummers

Lady Chief warrior and boatman



Yali and elephant fighting scene



Warriors shown in fighting Scene

Elephant and Nandi

Dancing poses

Conclusion

The Chola rulers of Thanjavur were great conquerors . Their rule extended up to Ganges in the north,upto Sri Lanka in the south. Apart from this they also had their sway at Burma, Malayan peninsula and South East Asian countries. To show cost their valour, power and mightiness, the chola emperors constructed large number of temples in their empire. The temples are stands for their architectural marvel and sculptural beauty. Most of the Chola temples dedicated to Lord Siva. The benevolent act of God Siva are depicted with pious in this temples.

The Chola art reached its peak during the time of Rajaraj I, his distinguished son Rajendra I and Kulothunga III. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy a pioneering historian and philosopher of Indian art, particularly art history and symbolism, and an early interpreter of Indian culture to the West has said, "Everything man made must have a deeply religious meaning, it must be made with the gods in mind and their image, it must face towards the gods, reach towards the gods and symbolize the gods". This aspect mentioned by Coomaraswamy made the Cholas rulers to construct the marvellous temples. the Chola kings are no more but their temples speak the legacy of their rule as *long as the sun and the moon endure* .

We the Enrich EduCDs...

Enrich EduCDs is sucessfully entering into its fifth title by way of bringing out this book on "CHOLA MARVELS on historical perspective"in English. The Temple serve as illustrations to bring out the divergent perceptions towards art. Particularly to enderstand these divergent perceptions the study of Chola temples is necessary. The Later Chola dynasty held its sway over South India from 10th to 14th century CE. They made their impressions in temple building activities, sculptural and other arts. Temples are important centre for art.

We, the Enrich EduCDs felt that it is our ardent duty to bring out the architectural and sculptural splendor of the Chola temples released earlier as educational CDS, now as publication. As usual with different style, more informative with attractive photographs of which our publications are known. We are bringing out this book not only for the light readers like the tourist but also to the school - college students, who wish to know the sailent features of the Chola temples. We feel that this book will definitely serve the purpose. We will be encouraged if this publication fulfills the obligation of our initiative. We, wishers behind us in all our endeavors.

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Magnificent view of Sri Vimana, Gangaikondacholesvaram Temple

Chola Marvels